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GST INCLUSIVE

EASTERN SEABOARD IN LIMBO

By Mark Stavroulakis

The idea of having two divisions in next year's new national competition is in limbo after talks between Eastern Seaboard backers and ASA failed to produce agreement.

The Eastern Seaboard concept was put together by Soccer NSW President Tom Doumanis, who has stated that a second division with sides such as Sydney United, Marconi, Sydney Olympic, possibly Wollongong Wolves and various Victorian, Queensland and ACT sides could well have been part of the ASA revamp.

"We need to have a competitive league for those former NSL clubs and ambitious Premier League teams that want to go to the next level," said Doumanis.

It's understood ASA wants to put a hold on the Eastern Seaboard idea for now, stressing that they must focus on the APL itself first.

Close sources stated that both ASA chairman Frank Lowy and ASA CEO John O'Neill disliked the idea of having both competitions run at the same time.

ASA TO GIVE ITSELF MORE TIME

By Peter Damalas

The Australian Soccer Association has given prospective applicants to the proposed new national competition a clearer idea as to when the process will begin and conclude.

While the original statement from ASA indicated that the 8-teams to take part in the Australian Premier League would be announced in July/August, this deadline has been revised, with the governing body hopeful of completing the application and evaluation stage by the end of August.

Chief Executive Officer, John O'Neill, stated: "The enormity of the task before us in establishing a viable, sustainable and attractive national competition should not be underestimated, thus it is vital that we get the process right. If this necessitates the timetable's extension beyond what was originally envisaged, then it is to everyone's benefit- a more thorough process enhances the chance of a good outcome."

Certainly, building financially viable clubs from scratch is the most difficult aspect of establishing a successful competition, and the pressure will be on those interested parties, as they have a four to six week period in which to lodge formal applications. The next important date on the ASA calendar is May 3, when advertisements will be placed in the national, metropolitan and regional press in Australia and New Zealand, with the first registration of interest deadline two weeks later (May 14).

ASA has enlisted the services of MI Associates Pty Ltd, Project Management Consultants, to work on creating an Information Memorandum for the applicants, which details the processes involved.

An evaluation period will take place following the formal lodging of applications, and while this too was intended to take four to six weeks, ASA has recognised that the period may be longer, depending on the number and quality of applications received.

At this stage, there are eight parties who have expressed a significant interest in joining the APL revolution, and this is expected to increase over the next few weeks as bids from Newcastle, New Zealand, and one from the southern regions of New South Wales (Wollongong or Canberra) are expected.

NSL entity Marconi Stallions may also put a new bid together, joining in competition with NSW Soccer for the one Sydney team on offer. Other bids include Perth Glory, Adelaide United, Victorian Soccer Federation, Melbourne Victory, Central Coast Spirit FC, Queensland Lions and Brisbane Strikers.

Friday's announcement was crucial for the ASA in terms of keeping the interest of a number of these applicants, with speculation circulating that two parties were considering pulling out of the race, which would be potentially damaging for the APL.

It is believed that negotiations with commercial and broadcast partners has held up the process, as the Expressions of Interest document was scheduled for release last Wednesday (21/4).

O'Neill added: "the amended timetable provides us with opportunities to further advance our negotiations with potential television and commercial partners so that we are in a better position to provide more definitive information to applicants."

Soccer NSW spokesman Kyle Patterson, is of the opinion that the extra time will prove beneficial in the end.

"The future prosperity of soccer is at stake here, and we have one chance to get it right. If the ASA needs more time, so be it. This is far too important to be rushed," he said.

ASA CEO John O'Neill is looking for more possible avenues in his bid to help promote the APL next season.

YOUNG MATILDAS QUALIFY FOR WORLD CUP

By Janene Mar

The Young Matildas have qualified for the 2004 FIFA U19 Women's World Championship after comprehensively defeating hosts Papua New Guinea 14-1 on Saturday in the last match of the Oceania U19 Women's Qualifying Tournament at Lloyd Robson Oval in Port Moresby.

The Young Matildas finished in first position, five points ahead of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Australia will now compete in their second consecutive world youth championship come November in Thailand.

Australia is the first nation, other than the host, to confirm its place in the twelve-team finals lineup for Thailand 2004, the other five regional confederations to contest their qualification events later in the year.

Before an enthusiastically boisterous crowd of 4,215, the Young Matildas were never in doubt of claiming the victory today over the home side, clearly the dominant team throughout, but were made to work hard for their first few goals against a packed Papua New Guinea defence.

Selin Kuralay and Kylie Ledbrook both topped the scorers list for the day with a hattrick each, whilst Leah Blayney and Jenna Tristram both scored a pair.

Australia fielded five changes to the starting eleven from that which played on Thursday, giving all members of the 18-player side at least one run over the two matches.

The Young Matildas Australia U19 women's team in PNG (Photo by Peter Rees)

A somewhat laboured start saw the Australians unable to make the final pass in attack, finding the going tough against the Papua New Guinea holding firm in numbers in front of goal. It was to take some patience to work out how to break down the impervious wall. Katie Hilder had the best early chance, but didn't connect cleanly with Ledbrook's cross and goalkeeper Kiwi Toba got down quickly to gather the close range effort.

The Young Matildas opened their account in the 11th minute with a method that was later to produce numerous more goals. A long ball forward from deep over the PNG defence released Blayney in a one-on-one with the keeper, rounding Toba and dribbling into the open net. In the 21st minute, Australia doubled their lead, an early ball from deep on the left into the penalty box was met by the leap of Alannah Reed and despite the challenge of the keeper, scored with the header.

Six minutes later, Ledbrook took the score to 3-0, receiving the ball from a cut-back, and shouldering off a strong tackle before placing her shot low inside the post from 16 metres.

On the half hour, Katie Hilder was next to convert a long Elissia Canham ball from the left, timing her run to convert a simple header unmarked from 7 metres.

(Continued on Page 6)

FIERY DEMONS HIT BONNYRIGG FOR FIVE

Turn to Page 18 for the full match report

Blacktown City Demon players celebrate their five-nil romp over the hapless Bonnyrigg White Eagles

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BY DANIEL KUZIOW

Liverpool legend Ian Rush has backed winger Harry Kewell to recapture his best form in the closing weeks of the season.

With just a handful of games left this season, the Reds need to pick up as many points as possible to beat Newcastle the fourth and qualify for next season,s Champions League.

Since arriving from Leeds United last summer, Kewell has 11 netted times ^ becoming Liverpool's second highest goalscorer of the season and Rush told Liverpool's official website: "Harry has been the first to admit he's not been happy with his form this season, but I wouldn't bet against him making a difference against United.

"I know Harry well and he's an honest player. What he's lacking at the moment, and has been since he came back from injury, is confidence.

"But he's still a class act and a manager is always likely to persist with players like him because it only takes a split second for all the self-belief to come flooding back.

"Harry has the ability to score a stunning goal or deliver a defence-splitting pass. At a venue like Old Trafford, you can also be certain the opponents will still be worried about what he could do to them."

****

Leeds United have dismissed reports that they have opened negotiations to sell Mark Viduka, labelling such speculation 'unhelpful'.

Local reports claim that United Chairman Gerald Krasner met with officials from Turkish side Galatasaray last week and talks had begun to prepare the way for the Australian international to leave the club in the summer.

But these were knocked down by United Managing Director David Richmond.

He told Leedsunited.com: "We categorically deny any interest from Galatasaray in Mark Viduka our any of our players".

As the end of the current campaign approaches, the papers are certain to be full of more transfer speculation concerning Leeds stars and even management.

The board are keen to ensure that all attention is focused on keeping The Whites in the Premiership.

"Speculation is not particularly helpful," said Chairman Gerald Krasner.

"We do not want anything that is going to distract from the football at this stage. We want to let Eddie and the players get on with it and secure our Premiership safety."

Meanwhile Viduka has threatened to go on strike because the club have stopped paying part of his £65,000-a-week contract.

Under the terms of Viduka's current five-year deal, Leeds had been paying £20,000 a week to a company called On The Ball. In return, the company are contracted to scout for the club for players in his native Australia and the rest of Oceania.

However, the company has yet to find a single player who has joined Leeds and former chairman and chief executive Trevor Birch halted the payments at the start of November. Birch had been in negotiations to pay back the £450,000 arrears but this has not been ratified by new chairman Gerald Krasner and Viduka's patience finally snapped last week.

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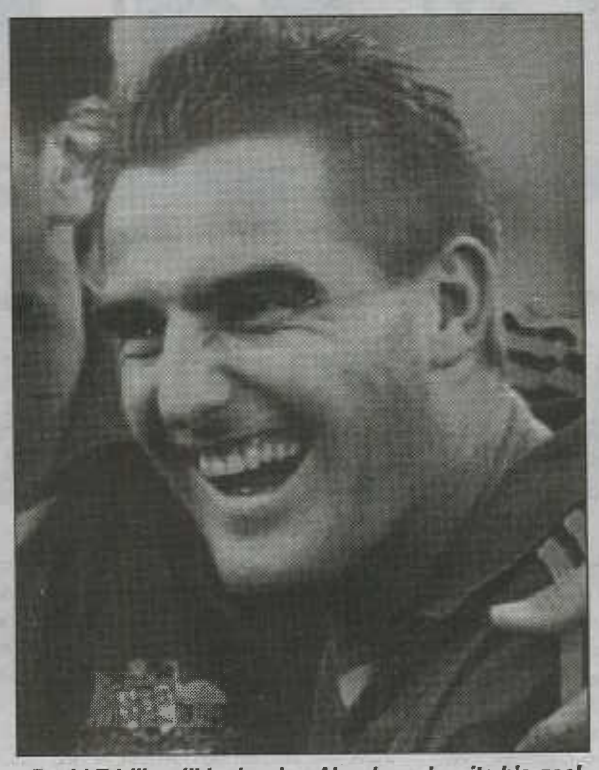


David Zdrilic will be leaving Aberdeen despite his goal against Celtic.

Former Perth Glory star David Tarka revealed last week that his non appearance for Nottingham Forest since coming back form international duty has been due to a heart problem picked up while playing against Greece last month.

The 21 year old told foresttalk.co.uk: "I picked up a virus which caused an abnormal impulse on an ECG reading that I had to take after dropping out of training in Greece one day.

"It was pretty scary at the time, particularly as I found myself in a Greek hospital wired up to a machine that was at least 50 years old.

"I actually signed myself out of hospital because I wanted to get back to England to get all the necessary tests.

"I had another scan recently which showed that everything is back to normal. The impulses are all fine but I've been told I can't jump straight back into training because there's a slight possibility it could come back.

"I've just got to build up my training work-load over the next couple of weeks but I've been told it won't be a long-term problem."

****

Tim Cahill last week denied that Millwall were being distracted by the FA Cup Final and insisted the players were "hungry" to get promoted.

Assistant manager Ray Wilkins voiced his concerns after the 2-1 defeat to Watford last Tuesday that some players were "being careful" not to pick up any knocks ahead of the Manchester United game next month.

But Cahill said promotion is still the priority for the eighth placed Lions.

"I don't think anyone should worry that our minds are not on getting into the play-offs with the Cup Final coming up," he said.

"Everyone's put that completely to one side, because we are all so hungry to get promoted and we believe if we get in the play-offs we are good enough to beat anyone," Cahill told thisislondon.com

"[But} what we have needed more than anything is a bit of a rest," he said.

"The Watford game was our 16th in just under two months. For us to have maintained the consistency we have over that period, in spite of the injuries says a lot."

Cahill will sit out the following two matches against Reading and next week's trip to Derby following his red card against Cardiff and he knows one more yellow card, to add to the 14 he has accumulated this season, would mean an additional three-match suspension, including either two play-off semi-finals or the FA Cup Final.

"This has obviously been at the back of my mind," admitted Cahill.

"I now have to be professional and recognise I can't afford another mistake."

****

Portsmouth defender Hayden Foxe is confident he will be playing in the Premiership next season.

Foxe who has just had foot surgery in Sydney and won't be available until September, but told Pompey's website: "We knew it was going to be tough having just been promoted from the First Division but the team are beginning to get results at the right time and that has piled pressure on those around them.

"I think we have what it takes to survive."

****

David Zdrilic struck the winner for Aberdeen against Celtic this week, but is still expected to leave Pittodrie at the end of the season.

The Australia international striker is off contract in the summer and manager Steve Paterson has indicated he won't be offered a new deal - despite his heroics against the Hoops.

"I was virtually pleading with the players yesterday not to lie down," said Pele. "I was praying they could at least make sure we came back up the road with some of our pride intact. "But they ended up making me as happy as I have felt in the whole of my career.

"I ended up having to face the champions with a group of kids and guys like Zdrilic, who has gone through a hard time and probably won't be with us at the end of the season. "It was a makeshift team and our game plan was to frustrate Celtic and hope to catch them on the break. "Every player carried out their instructions and I can't praise them enough.

"It's just an incredible story." Zdrilic decided against discussing his own future, instead

saying: "You only have to look at football - it is a funny game. It is always a team which you don't expect which does something like this. It is just brilliant. "We had three or four teenagers in the team and I take my hat off to them, as you never know how they were going to react at such a stage.

"This is too important a moment for the fans and the club for me to be talking about my future. I am really enjoying this night. Every time I've spoken about my future, it's come out wrong. It's a brilliant night for the team and for me."

****

Canberra Deakin youngster Robbie Cattanach is impressing in extended trials at Partick Thistle.

The young striker, who helped Deakin become the first club outside the NSL to win the National Youth title this year, has been at the Jags for two weeks.

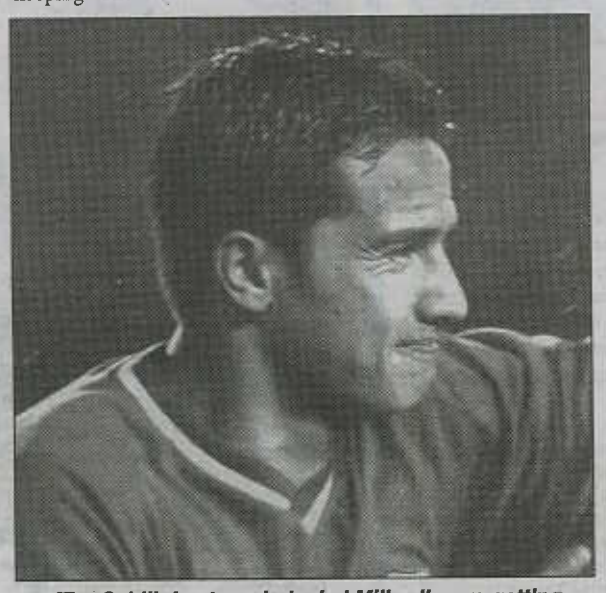
Cattanach's agent, Lou Sticca, told tribalfootball.com: "Partick are impressed by Robbie. We know it's a massive step up from youth soccer in Australia to what he is doing in Scotland, but he's handling it well."

****

Crystal Palace chairman Simon Jordan is expected to try again to sign Oldham Athletic goalkeeper Les Pogliacomi in the summer.

Palace made an approach for Pogliacomi earlier in the year following the appointment of ex-Latics boss Iain Dowie as new manager. But the big Aussie declined to speak with the London club.

Pogliacomi wants to finish the season at Boundary Park before deciding his next move. Dowie will lose on-loan Birmingham City keeper Nico Vaesen in the summer and will again try for Pogliacomi, who is now rated the best keeper in the Second Division after a record-breaking campaign.



Tim Cahill: Last week denied Millwall were getting distracted ahead of their FA Cup showdown with Man United.

Les Pogliacomi could be a Crystal Palace target.

LAZARIDIS TO PLAY IN AUSTRALIA

Stan Lazaridis is keen on the friendly matches against Turkey in May.

Birmingham City midfielder Stan Lazaridis has given Socceroo coach Frank Farina a boost for the two-game series against Turkey and the OFC Nations Cup, declaring his availability for all games.

Lazaridis chances of playing looked bleak after suffering a groin injury early in the match against Manchester United three weeks ago, however yesterday the Socceroo favourite said he was hoping to back on the park in the next week or two.

"I'm actually looking to play next week against Arsenal, so it's looking good and not as bad as first thought," said Lazaridis in a telephone hook up.

"Obviously I don't see why not (playing against Turkey) and I am fully committed and fully looking forward to coming back."

That is welcome news to Farina who is already without defender Kevin Muscat and possibly current captain Craig Moore, who is having scans on his troubled knee and will know soon if he requires surgery that could rule him out of the games in late May and early June.

"It was a grade one strain (of the abductor muscle) and from the physios point of view, it was probably the better of all the strains to get. Basically a grade one is 2-3 weeks out of action."

Lazaridis, who will reach 50 full A internationals if he plays in the two games against Turkey, is very excited about coming back to play in front of a home crowds in Australia.

"I am really looking forward to it," Lazaridis said. "I think its terrific for the public as well that they can finally see us (the Socceroos) all back and see the best players come back to play in front of a home crowd. From a personal point of view it's great.

"Also we've played a lot of games away and had a lot of good results and it's a shame we haven't capitalised on that by returning home sooner and playing games. So this is a good opportunity for us to come back and obviously attract more people to come and watch the games."

Turkey is expected to bring a full strength squad that will include a few new faces, as they now prepare for their own 2006 World Cup qualifiers that will start later this year. Turkey finished third at the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan/Korea and its failure to beat Latvia in the Euro 2004 play-off was considered a major shock. Interestingly enough they have just chosen Socceroo midfielder Josip Skoko's trainer Ersun Yanal at Genclerbirligi to take charge of the National Team starting with the trip down under.

Lazaridis has no doubt's the two matches against Turkey, who are currently ranked 8th on the FIFA World Rankings, will be high quality affairs and believes these games will give a good indication of where the Socceroos are at on the world stage.

Asked if he was surprised that the Socceroos were playing Turkey, after they failed to qualify for the Euro 2004 Championships in Portugal (June), Lazaridis said, "Yes I was, mind you they were in a toughish group.

"It (Turkey) is a very good team. I mean a lot of their players play at big name clubs and they actually are very good games I have to say. It's going to be interesting to see how we go against them and is definitely a good test for us."

Unbeaten in its last three matches, the Socceroos will head into the Turkey games full of confidence it can achieve positive results and go into the OFC Nations Cup, which are also acting as World Cup qualifiers (Stage 2) on a high.

Asked about confidence among the team, Lazaridis said, "We always think that way. We have a lot of good players and we feel we are a match for anyone. On our particular day we can beat any team in the world.

In another positive note for the Socceroos, Lazaridis said that a lot of his focus over the next two years would be on Australia and reaching the World Cup. He has no doubts the other players, especially the older ones like Kevin Muscat, Paul Okon, Tony Vidmar, Danny Tiatto, Mark Schwarzer and Tony Popovic will be in the boat as this is likely to be their final opportunity to play in the greatest event in world sport.

Lazaridis also reserved praise to the younger players coming through especially Parma's Marco Bresciano.

"You need younger players coming through and not only coming through, but coming in and commanding positions and making them their own. Marco Bresciano has come in and he has really set the team alight, while Simon Colosimo's game against Venezuela was very impressive, Vince Grella and Mile Sterjovski have shown good technical ability when they have got a run.

"There is one or two others and it (the future) is looking healthy and you have to, as we will lose a lot of players after this campaign and you need faces that are going to be good enough to stand the test of time and maybe stay around for 2-3 campaigns."

Lazaridis also said he thought the game against Venezuela was extremely beneficial and would like to see the Socceroos play one or two more games in South America in order to get a feel of what it will be like if we get through to the final qualifier against the 5th placed South American qualifier.

He also ruled out any immediate return to Australia, saying he needed to be playing at the highest level in order to be a benefit to the Socceroos, but after the 2006 World Cup would definitely consider coming back to play in the new league.

Source – ASA website

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South Melbourne in Administration

It was a dark day for one of Australian soccer's most influential clubs last week when news filtered through that South Melbourne were to be placed into voluntary administration.

The four-time National Soccer League champions South have had debts of up to $1.5 million.

South Melbourne President Peter Mitrakis had no choice but to force the move of the administrators to avoid any illegal ramifications in terms of trading while insolvent.

Financial services group CJL Partners led by Richard Cauchi and David Lofthouse stated to 'The Age' in a brief statement:

"The appointment has arisen as a result of the directors of the club believing that the company may become insolvent if further trading was to occur. The appointment also occurs at a time when the future of the club and its place in a revamped competition is uncertain".

Mitrakis was steaming at the role in which new CEO John O'Neill has played so far in the running of the game.

"He should have stuck to rugby. They should not have made a series of recommendations as they did if they were planning to do something else. A lot of us spent a lot of time, money and effort working to those guidelines only to see them thrown out. We thought we had some future prospects then we found out in the last month that we had been putting money into an entity to try and create a future for it when it had no future", the South President stated to "The Age".

In 2000, the club earned a cool $3.8 million during the world club championships but the prize-money was used for player wages and also turning the club into a professional set-up.

South Melbourne's only hope of staying afloat would be to either gain a new backer for the club or reach an agreement with the chief of the Taxation Office in keeping the club's name alive so that it could have a chance to participate in next year's Victorian Premier League.

The only asset South have in playing its way towards a hopeful APL entry would be its hi-tech Bob Jane Stadium.

Known for being one of the best stadiums in Australia, Bob Jane will be Mitrakis' main weapon in asking to be part of the new reform – provided though that their financial difficulties are met.

At this current stage, the entire administrative staff at South have all parted company included CEO Mark Patterson who only joined the Blues this year.

VSF chairman Manny Galanos explained his concern on the South Melbourne affair and stated that it was a "sad day for soccer in this state".

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YOUNG SOCCEROOS END TOUR WITH A WIN

Young Socceroos coach Ange Postecoglou was positive about the U20s results in France.

The Young Socceroos completed their four-game tour of France and Belgium with a high quality 2-1 victory over the highly rated Paris St Germain reserve team in Paris.

Goals in the 10th minute to Billy Celeski and Mark Bridge after 26 minutes were enough to see off their celebrated opponents.

In fact, Paris St Germain's 15th minute goal was one of the only occasions where they seriously threatened Australia's well-defended goal.

The Young Socceroos were unfortunate not to take a greater lead to the interval, such was their dominance over the highly rated PSG team.

After the break, despite making wholesale changes to give everyone game time, Australia's had the two best chances, evolving after tremendous lead-up play, only for Jacob Timpano and Empoli midfielder Nick Stavroulakis to let PSG off the hook.

It was a great victory and finished off a highly productive tour for the young lads.

Cheered on by a cheerful crowd, the Australian boys were well received in France.

The 20-man squad all featured in the Young Socceroos various friendly matches that ended up with two wins and two losses.

Their first two games against Armentieres (2-1) & UNFP (1-0) ended in losses while their final two games apart from the PSG game, their two-nil win over Lens were quite credible results.

At this stage, coach Ange Postecoglou will hold yet another camp in July as he prepares the squad for the Oceania Qualifiers in January.

All the Australian based players reported that the camp itself was a terrific experience and that they all hope they will be apart of Ange's final squad in a few months time.

One bad aspect though for the local boys will be the lack of match fitness.

Having no National League running, most players will be without a club.

Even playing in the local leagues from across Australia could become a problem.

Most youngsters are looking for a way out to Europe to resurrect their careers.

An extensive interview on Ange Postecoglou and his thoughts of the U20s squad will feature in next week's *ABSW*.

OLYROOS READY FOR TUNISIAN TEST

Australia Under-23 coach Frank Farina announced his Australia Under-23s (Olympic) team squad for the international match against Tunisia to be played in the Tunisian city of Monastir tomorrow (Wednesday 28 April 2004 2.00pm local time).

The squad comprises 8 players from the recently completed National Soccer League season, including recent Socceroo debutantes Ahmad Elrich and Nick Carle, while Adelaide United midfielder Fred Agius is a first time inclusion at Under-23 national team level.

Not considered on injury grounds were Ljubo Milicevic and David Tarka.

Coach Frank Farina said, "This is another important step for the Under-23 players as we continue to prepare them for Athens 2004, especially as the Tunisians will provide us with a different style of play to some of the other countries we have faced at this level.

"Tunisia has already qualified for the Olympic Games, so I will be really looking forward to how we measure up against them and how the boys handle the Tunisians. All in all it is another good match confirmed by ASA and we will be looking to get a result," said Frank Farina.

The match will be played at the 20,000 capacity Ben Jannet Stadium, with the stadium having been built for the recently completed 2004 African Nation Cup of Nations, which was won by the host nation when they defeated Morocco 2-1 in the final.

Following the Tunisian match a 20-man two-week camp will be convened at the Australian Institute of Sport for Australian-based Under-23 players only, concentrating on a fitness program.

The men's football tournament at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games will be held between 11 August and 28 August 2004, with the group draw for the tournament due to be staged on 9 June 2004.

The full 19-man squad is: -

AGIUS Fred
Adelaide United FC AUSTRALIA
BROSQUE Alex
Marconi FC AUSTRALIA
CANSDELL-SHERRIFF Shane
Aarhus GF DENMARK
CARLE Nick
Marconi FC AUSTRALIA
DILEVSKI Spase
Rot-Weiss Essen GERMANY
EDDS Gareth
Bradford City FC ENGLAND
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MADASCHI Adrian
Partick Thistle SCOTLAND
MCDONALD Scott
Motherwell FC SCOTLAND
MCKAIN Jonathan
FC National Bucuresti ROMANIA
NORTH Jade
Perth Glory AUSTRALIA
THWAITE Michael
Marconi FC AUSTRALIA
WILKSHIRE Luke
Bristol City ENGLAND
VALERI Carl
Internazionale Milan FC ITALY

Fred Agius has gained his first Olyroo cap with Farina's squad in Tunisia.

Perth Glory explore Stock Exchange option

Perth Glory have actively begun plans to list the club on the Australian Stock Exchange.

A questionnaire has gone out to 1000 club members seeking their views on the radical step, which is seen as a way to attract further investment ahead of the new Australian domestic competition.

"We are examining a number a different options," chief executive Jeff Dennis told the West Australian. "This is one.

"This is an exercise in seeking I ways of fundraising so we can make the club bigger and better."

Glory owner Nick Tana also said, "At this stage all we are doing is putting it out among our own people.

"We want to talk to our fans, our sponsors etc."

The Glory's bold bid to become part of the Stock Exchange has been yet another way in which the new APL will benefit if the Glory make the cut in next year's competition.

DESPOTOVSKI CLAIMS HAT-TRICK

Perth Glory striker Bobby Despotovski has claimed a hat-trick of Most Glorious Player awards.

Despotovski received a standing ovation at the MGP Ball and also won the Supporters' Player of the Year prize.

The Players' Player of the Season title went to Tom Pondeljak, who also won the Mel Moffat Medal, voted for by the media for performances in Glory's home games.

Matt Bingley won the Coaches' Player of the Year title, Nick Mrdja was voted Clubman of the Year and there was a special presentation of a Life Membership to Perth Glory's inaugural captain Gareth Naven. Despotovski's win was his third, the star striker having won the title in 1999/01 and 2001/2002.

Three's a charm: Bobby Despotovski showing off his silverware from last week's MGB Ball.

FARINA GOES OUTBACK

Socceroo coach Frank Farina last week headed for the Queensland outback in a bid to help promote 'The World Game' to several indigenous communities.

The Outback Tours, organised by Soccer Queensland's Development Manager for Remote, Isolated and Indigenous Communities Natalie Cardwell and is the second tour for 2004. Boulia and Dajarra in Queensland's northwest are the first two stops on this tour.

Farina and Cardwell were also joined by Australian Soccer Association National Coaching & Development Manager Jim Selby plus Adelaide United star Fred Agius and Matildas hopeful and Queensland Sting striker Belinda Dawney.

This trip is special though Cardwell said, "during the first few days of the tour I get to take some very special people with me.

Selby nearly a veteran now of the outback tours is back for another look to see at the bush kids, and Agius will was welcomed back with opened arms after participating in a similar tour back in 2000.

Agius had a terrific end of season with club Adelaide United and was also selected to play for Farina's Olympic squad against Tunisia.

"The kids still ask about him (Agius) each time I visit," said Cardwell so it will be great to have him come back out and see how much they have improved. Belinda coming is a great asset for the girls, as they will be able to see a female national player up close."

"Four girls from Dajarra have been selected in the district primary school girls soccer team, so hopefully she will be able to pass on some great tips."

The biggest thrill for Natalie and the towns is the inclusion of Socceroos coach Frank Farina on the tour. Farina, exceptionally busy with the Socceroos and Under 23's with upcoming internationals, has been able to free up his much valued time and head out west to see the kids. It's hoped frank will be able to give an insight into playing soccer at a national level and tell the kids that if they are good at it and keep with it they too might make the Socceroos or Matildas teams one day.

Also travelling with the outback tour is Glen Brennan from the indigenous sports program with the Australian Sports Commission – Brennan will be able to view first hand the importance that sport (soccer in particular) is to remote communities.

Cardwell continues on tour to the western side of Cape York (Kowanyama & Pormpuraaw) the following week with Melinda Turner another representative from the Sports Commission and then heads for the savannah gulf country to Burketown.

Many of the players selected for the state outback development teams come from these areas and Cardwell will be delivering their training gear and individual training programs to each of the players and their mentors coaches.

"We Are in Very Good Hands with Lowy and O'Neill" — Tony Palumbo

By Joe Russo

With Frank Lowy and John O'Neill running soccer in Australia we are in very good hands, says SBS radio and television journalist Tony Palumbo. And he should know.

Palumbo, along with Lowy and the late Alex Pongrass, were the original people responsible for setting up the old National Soccer League back in 1977.

Speaking on Sunday Night Soccer on radio 98.5 FM (every Sunday in NSW at 10.00pm) Palumbo said he is confident that Lowy and O'Neill will do their best for soccer in Australia and that it was a quantum leap in quality from past management at Australian soccer's governing body.

Tony Palumbo knows that the Australian game is in good hands with Lowy and O'Neill.

"I do think we are in very good hands with Lowy and O'Neill and, in terms of quality, they leave the others for dead," he enthused.

"Never before have we had such quality at the top of the hierarchy and I trust that with their contacts they will be able to kick it off."

Palumbo is confident that the Australian Soccer Association has the right people in place and that, with their relevant contacts, will be able to open the right doors to make a new national football league viable in Australia.

It is not too dissimilar to the project he worked on with Lowy and Pongrass almost three decades ago but there is one clear difference now – Australia's best players, unlike in 1977, are all overseas. Palumbo highlighted the challenge in enticing some of them back.

"It is not déjà vu because the situation is now completely different as the best players are overseas," he said.

"The idea back then was to get the better players of the country in the one competition instead of having them spread all over the various State competitions."

Nevertheless there are similarities between today and the past and it is inevitable that comparisons will be made between the 1977 NSL and the new APL which is mooted to start in mid 2005. After all Lowy was a key player then and is perhaps an even more important one now.

The 2005 APL will have to break free from the shackles of the old NSL in order to win over confidence and support from the broader Australian public.

Interest in soccer in Australia has always been high but the NSL, especially in its latter years, was never able to capitalise on that interest. The domestic game just didn't rate even though following of overseas football, such as the English Premier League, Italian Serie A and at World Cup times, was high.

"We are back doing exactly the same thing but this time in damage control. At least 27 years ago we were all enthusiastic about something new," Palumbo told listeners.

"Now we are picking up the pieces and quite frankly the past will be very, very difficult to overcome. It is going to be extremely difficult."

Palumbo is critical of past management for not delivering what was promised and sees a certain irony in the fact that the Australian Soccer Association had to return to SBS television in order to get coverage of the NSL Final Series.

"I think there are many reasons for our current troubles but one reason we have had such poor media coverage recently can be traced back to the David Hill era," he said.

"This deal we had with Channel 7 did not deliver one percent of what we were promised. It is interesting that they [ASA] had to go back to SBS to have the Final Series covered."

With the demise of the NSL comes the demise of some clubs that were icons of the old competition, such as Marconi Stallions and Sydney Olympic, and it would appear that both will be playing out of the NSW State League next year.

Palumbo, while partially blaming Marconi for their own demise, is disappointed that such a great club with their own fantastic stadium, training facilities, thriving social club with 20,000 members and wonderful infrastructure, will not likely be a part of the new APL.

Given that Marconi were a foundation club in the NSL and an icon of Australian soccer from day one of that competition, Palumbo thinks that the entry criteria for the APL, whereby each new club is expected to invest around $5 million without any guaranteed return, may be setting the bar too high.

"It is not icons that they are after and Marconi, right in the middle of Liverpool City and Fairfield City, were not able to attract spectators because they were not exactly a force in the last couple of competitions," he said.

"Having said that though, here we have a club which is already in existence and has got its own fabulous facilities which you can compare with the best in the world.

"However, the requirements are such that I cannot see the Marconi board taking the responsibility to spend $5 million and who is going to pay afterwards if things go wrong? It is a pity but maybe we are going to have a good State League in NSW."

With the break from now until the start of the new APL reported to be in the vicinity of some 15 months, Palumbo sees this as too long and fears that more players will only head overseas in search of contracts.

Ironically, if this scenario does eventuate, then the new APL, which has as one of its pillars the promise of bringing home a lot of the Australian players currently playing overseas, will find its task more difficult.

Palumbo also feels that the Professional Footballers' Association should have been more vocal in opposing such a long break for its members.

"I think it is going to have a terrible effect on the players. I am surprised that the players' association didn't make itself heard more loudly and the few good players that we have left here are already gone or in the process of going," he said.

The eight team model that is currently being proposed doesn't sit too well with Palumbo either who, like many others, believes that it may be too few.

"Personally I think eight teams are too few and cities such as Melbourne and Sydney could have afforded possibly two teams. This way you would have continuity and every Sunday there would be a soccer match in these cities," he told listeners.

On the subject of State federations backing teams Palumbo is optimistic that bodies, such as Soccer NSW, may be able to follow the lead from South Australia.

The perceived conflict of interest is not really an issue for Palumbo but he does warn that similar experiences with a new national soccer league, such as the MLS in the USA, have ended in disaster and financial ruin.

"The answer would be obviously that there is a conflict of interest but when you look at what happened with Adelaide United you must wonder if this is possibly the only way out," he said.

"In theory a federation should be for everyone but maybe the various clubs at lower levels can back this top team in the new league in the belief that, after all, it is their team as well.

"However, we do have this deadly comparison with the league in North America which did start with great fanfare, money, top players and so on, but went broke a few years later. I sincerely hope that it doesn't happen here."

Sunday Night Soccer airs weekly at 10.00pm every Sunday on radio 98.5 FM in NSW.

NEGUS' HARD-LINE ON THE APL

By Daniela Raco

Are the workings of the proposed Australian Premier League viable?

We wait with baited breath for all to be unraveled. The workings are in motion; ideas on the plate. It's a time of called-for change; a renovation of the game.

One thing is certain; if we don't know what we are working towards it will become unstuck. Former Soccer Australia director, and keen ideas man, GEORGE NEGUS gets down to the nitty, gritty with *ABSW*.

CAN THE NEW BOARD TAKE THE GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

It depends on what they think the next level is. If they haven't worked out what the basic problem in Australian soccer is which is a total lack of a link between the base of the game and the National League then it will not work.

The biggest problem the game has had, and to me it is the self-evident truth, there are enormous numbers, enough players both at a junior level and a senior level all over the country to make soccer the most powerful sport in this country but because there is no link it will not happen.

You can have eight teams, ten teams, twenty teams, two teams, and put them wherever you like in the country, but unless the link is made between the hundreds of thousands of players and their families and the weekly games that occur in the National League then nothing will change, and it doesn't matter who is on the board. It doesn't matter whether Frank Lowy is one of the richest men in the country, or if John O'Neill is one of the most committed sports businessmen in the country.

It doesn't matter how much money and experience they have got, if they miss that point nothing will change. You cannot suddenly get bums on seats if you don't recognize the problem.

The reason you don't get all the people that support soccer to support the National League is that 90% of them don't even know that it exists. I'm fully supportive of Frank Lowy and John O'Neill, but unless they recognize that this is the fundamental problem and issue then they will be taking two steps forward and three back like the rest of us always have. It's a question of marketing the National League, not to the media, not the sponsors, or financiers, or backers etc, although these things are important, it's a matter of marketing soccer to the soccer family itself.

Every National League game around the country should have a minimum of ten thousand people at every game. And when they get close to ten thousand, they should aim for fifteen thousand, then thirty thousand. You have got to get soccer people to soccer matches. I hope they do it. The games greatest strength is its numbers and the link needs to be made with the National League. All of Frank Lowy's money and all of John O'Neill's experience will count for nothing unless they see their job as creating that link.

DOES THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAVE THE BACKING OF THE PEOPLE?

I think everyone in Australian soccer wants it to work. One mistake they are making, and I have spoken briefly to Frank Lowy and John O'Neill about this and I'm delighted to say that they are prepared to talk to people that have been involved in the past, is that they almost appear to be thinking that anyone that was involved in the administration of Australian soccer before them is either stupid or corrupt. That is absolute rubbish.

George Negus former Soccer Australia Director.

There are so many talented, experienced, well-intentioned, hardworking people that have lots to offer Australian soccer that are currently being ostracized by the current board. That is another link they need to make. A link between themselves and soccer lovers who have been involved in the administration of the game before.

They need to be consultative and co-op the assistance of well-meaning, talented, experienced people from Australia's soccer past that can help them fill in the gaps. It will not cost them a cent. The game deserves it.

WOLLONGONG NEWS

By Otto Bader

Local Wollongong Soccer

The Premier League clubs in Illawara are very enticing for Sydney soccer well known soccer players to join. Recent signings have confirmed that trend.

Kiama Soccer club has gained the service of Saso Petrovski, the Parramatta Power NSL leading striker, a great boost for the area and fans.

West Illawarra has signed 'shovel' David Cervinski, the former Wolves stopper.

Port Kembla has won the service of Dominic Longo from Marconi and Justyn Roberts, returning from a stint in Sweden.

Bulli has contracted Noel Spencer from Northern Spirit NSL club and past Wolves player.

Coniston Lions have attracted Paul Kohler, a NSL regular with Sydney Olympic.

Also a couple of experienced NSW State league players have joined the local competition which does prove the South Coast soccer competitions are attractive and respected outside Wollongong.

Small Football World

Not counting the other Australian football codes the real one played in Europe is a life goal for young Australians.

It was noticed that Michael Thwaite (Marconi NSL star) made the Australian U/23 squad (Olympic games team) and by sheer chance was staying in the same hotel in Saint Etienne, France as the young Wolves and their support group.

The tall defender was accompanied by his agent and told us that he was on trial with Auxerre a First division France league soccer club, at present 5th on the table. One never knows who turns up in European football at any given place like hopeful young players seeking fame.

Premier League Standings

The expected suspects are heading the table with Port Kembla first on 16 points, 5 wins, no draws, 1 loss, ahead of Picton Rangers on 13 points 4 wins, 1 draw, 1 loss, followed by Albion Park WE on 12 points, Cringila Lions on 12 points, 4 wins, no draws, 2 losses, Tarrawanna 10 points, 3 wins, 1 draw, 2 losses, Dapto on 10 points, 3 wins, 1 draw, 2 losses, Coniston Lions on 9 points, 3 wins, 1 draw, 3 losses, Wollongong Olympic on 8 points, 2 wins, 2 draws, 2 losses, , Bulli on 8 points, 2 wins, 2 draws, 2 losses, Balgownie Rangers on 7 points, 2 wins, 2 draws, 2 losses, Warilla Wanderers on 5 points, 1 win, 2 draws, 3 losses, Kemblawarra on 5 points, 1 win, 2 draws, 3 losses, Kiama on 4 points, 1 win, 1 draw, 4 losses, West Illawarra on 1 point, mo win, 1 draw, 5 losses.

In Reserve Grade Albion Park WE is leading with 15 points followed by Picton Rangers, Bulli and Coniston Lions all on 13 points.

In Youth Grade Port Kembla is in front with 18 points, followed by Kemblawarra 15, Coniston lions 13, Albion Park WE on 12 and Warilla Wanderers also on 12 points.

This year's Premier league competition without doubt looks as the best ever with every game hard fought, a three points gain can elevate the club up the ladder and every week seemingly new upcoming and experienced players eying for a spot to cast their fame, each game will be exciting to watch.

Cup Matches Round 2

Brings together Bulli (Premier league) v Ruse (First Division), Balgownie Rangers (Premier league) v University (First Division), Helensburgh (First Division) v Dapto (Premier League), Wollongong Olympic (Premier league) v Kiama (Premier league), Corrimal Rangers (First Division) v Cringila Lions (Premier league), Shoalhaven City (First Division) v West Illawarra (Premier league), Shellharbour Workers (First Division) v Coniston Lions (Premier league)

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2003-04

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
1.Preston Lions SC	**10**	**6**	**2**	**2**	**20**	**15**	**20**
2.Frankston Pines SC	9	6	1	2	22	12	19
3.Oakleigh Cannons SC	10	6	1	3	19	17	19
4.Whittlesea Stallions SC	10	5	2	3	20	15	17
5.St Albans Saints SC	9	5	1	3	18	12	16
6.Bulleen Zebras SC	9	5	0	4	21	15	15
7.Green Gully Cavaliers SC	9	4	3	2	13	10	15
8.Fawkner Blues SC	10	3	4	3	17	12	13
9.Bentleigh Greens SC	10	3	3	4	18	16	12
10.Essendon Royals SC	10	2	2	6	15	31	8
11.Altona Magic SC	10	1	2	7	12	26	5
12. Knox City SC	10	0	3	7	13	27	3

Round 10 Results

Oakleigh Cannons .2 — Fawkner Blues 1
(Juan Nilo, Nick Marinos)

Essendon Royals ..1 — Altona Magic 0
(Steven Pace)

Preston Lions .....1 — Knox City 0
(Johnny Cvetanovski)

Bentleigh Greens ..1 — Whittlesea Stallions ..7
(Evan Papadopoulos) — *(Zoran Petrevski 4, Arthur Tsirtsakis, Ivan Razov, Serkan Oksuz)*

Round 11

Sat, 1 May, 3:00PM
Knox City SC vs. Green Gully Cavaliers SC

Sat, 1 May, 5:30PM
Altona Magic SC vs. Bulleen Zebras SC

Sun, 2 May, 3:00PM
Fawkner Blues SC vs. Bentleigh Greens SC
Frankston Pines SC vs. Oakleigh Cannons SC
St Albans Saints SC vs. Preston Lions SC

Mon, 3 May, 8:15PM
Whittlesea Stallions SC vs. Essendon Royals SC

Young striker Serkan Oksuz scored in Whittlesea's seven-one romp over Bentleigh last weekend.

SOCCERWOMAN BY JANENE MAR

YOUNG MATILDAS QUALIFY

(Front Page Continued)

The floodgates soon opened with another five goals in the space of ten minutes before the break.

Kuralay chased down a ball placed over the defence in the 35th minute, and got in her shot just ahead of the pressuring goalkeeper, a low drive into the back of the net from 14 metres. A minute later, Kuralay added another from a long ball, this time taking it right to the keeper still glued to her line and slotting it home for a 6-0 lead. Substitute Cartwright was next on the end of a long ball forward, and did well to get a shot in from an acute angle on the left with her opponent at very close quarters.

Next, a Blayney corner from the left was not cleared by the defence and fell perfectly for Sally Shipard to tap in from close range. Ledbrook took the Australians in at halftime 9-0 with a low drive on the turn from 12 metres.

Four minutes into the second half, Kuralay's hattrick goal sent the score into double figures, the striker running in at goal and shooting just before the keeper's challenge, placed low inside the right post. Two minutes later, Ledbrook claimed her triple, converting a direct freekick from just outside the 18-yard box low inside the left post.

An incident in the 57th minute seemed to provide something of a turning point for Papua New Guinea, when their goalkeeper was injured in a challenge and stretchered from the field. Having already made their allowed three substitutions, PNG were forced to play the remaining 33 minutes with ten players and defender Neilen Limbai was handed the goalkeeper's jersey. Down 11-0, the further setback seemed only to steel the resolve of Papua New Guinea.

Midway through the half, PNG pushed the ball forward, and a weak backpass by the Australian defence was intercepted by striker Martha Kiapin, whose route to goal was impeded as she was held back by a defender, and a penalty awarded to rapturous cheers from the home fans. Limbai ran from the goals at the opposite end to take the spot kick, and her low strike to the right of the keeper sent the crowd wild.

The goal lifted Papua New Guinea's spirits even higher, and they seemed to be even quicker to shut down their opponent all over the park.

Substitute Jenna Tristram stretched Australia's goal tally to thirteen with two goals in five minutes. First she struck from 5 metres on the left low past the keeper, then a rebound off a defender allowed her to run in on goal and a simple slot home.

A succession of mostly long-range attempts from the tiring Australians failed to find the target, and Neilen also made a couple of solid saves. Finally one last goal took the Australian haul to fourteen five minutes into stoppage time when Blayney won the ball 35 metres out and made a solo run through the opposition before making no mistake with the finish.

Four Young Matildas today celebrated their youth international debut - Reed, Hilder, Julia Bazi, and Claire O'Shea.

National Coach Adrian Santrac was pleased with the team's display and naturally delighted to now be heading to the world championship. "We're very happy. We came here with the aim of qualifying for the world cup and we've achieved that - we're very very pleased. Papua New Guinea gave everything that they had and competed well."

Looking forward to the World Championship itself in November, Santrac added, "We obviously want to do well. At the last world cup in 2002, the team did very very well finishing fifth. We want to go to this one and see if we can do the same or better."

Today, at the tournament's conclusion, Papua New Guinea was announced as the winner of the tournament Fair Play award.

The 2nd FIFA U19 Women's World Championship will be held in Thailand, 10-27 November 2004.

Australia successfully competed in the inaugural FIFA U19 Women's World Championship in 2002 in Canada, exceeding all expectations with an impressive 5th place finish, after going down 4-3 to a golden goal against Brazil in the quarterfinals.

OFC (OCEANIA) U19 WOMEN'S QUALIFYING TOURNAMENT
20-24 April 2004
Lloyd Robson Oval,
Port Moresby,
Papua New Guinea

ROUND THREE
Saturday 24 April 2004

Result: AUSTRALIA 14 (Leah Blayney 11', 95+', Alannah Reed 21', Kylie Ledbrook 27', 45', 51', Katie Hilder 30', Selin Kuralay 35', 36', 49', Renee Cartwright 40', Sally Shipard 43', Jenna Tristram 73', 78')

PAPUA NEW GUINEA 1 (Neilen Limbai 69' pen)

Halftime score: 9-0
Kickoff: 3.00pm
Weather: Hot, fine, strong breeze, 31°C
Pitch Condition: Grass surface
Match Officials: Referee - Michael Afu (SOL), Assistant Referees - Mata Iroa (COK), Michelle Treloar (AUS), Fourth Official - Jacqui Melksham (AUS).
Crowd: 4,215

AUSTRALIA Lineup: Claire O'Shea (GK), Elissia Canham, Emma Davison (capt), Sally Shipard, Kylie Ledbrook, Selin Kuralay (Jenna Tristram 65'), Leah Blayney, Katie Hilder (Lauren Colthorpe 46'), Julia Bazi, Kim Carrol,. Alannah Reed (Renee Cartwright 34').

Unused Substitutes: Alison Logue (GK), Nicole Somi, Ellen Beaumont, Leena Khamis.

Cautions: nil
Expulsions: nil

PAPUA NEW GUINEA Lineup: Kiwi Toba (GK), Edith Sabaewa (capt), Karen Dobbin, Esther Muta (Martha Kiapin 18'), Cecily Dobbin, Cecilia Dobbin (Patricia Logha 46'), Caroline Moeder, Samantha Peninsa, Aileen Lepani (Beverly Bilie 55'), Jacqueline Chalau, Neilen Limbai.

Unused Substitutes: Josepha Nion (GK), Talita Dobbin, Francisca Mandoni, Ludy Sabaewa, Jenny Mogi, Helen Samba.

Cautions: nil
Expulsions: nil

YOUNG MATILDAS WIN BY DOUBLE FIGURES IN OPENING QUALIFIER

Australia's Young Matildas are well on track in their qualification quest after comfortably defeating Solomon Islands 13-0 Thursday afternoon, the Australians' first match of the OFC U19 Women's Qualifying Tournament.

The result puts Australia two points clear at the top of the points ladder in the three-nation event.

The Young Matildas dominated the match in the afternoon heat, and could have scored more goals but for some wayward shooting.

There were periods of classy passing combinations, the understanding and running off the ball at times a pleasure to watch.

But after leading at the break by nine goals, the Australians' game fell away with some scrappy play in the second half.

Solomon Islands, competing in their first ever OFC women's event at any age level, put up a most spirited display until the final whistle.

Although clearly outplayed, their determination in their defensive duties never waned, continuing to quickly shut down their opponent right to the end, and were also keen to push forward whenever possible, testing the Australian backline on the odd occasion, but without getting in sight of goal.

Rookie Leena Khamis led the way in attack for Australia, coming away with a fantastic haul of five goals on debut, whilst Selin Kuralay and Leah Blayney each scored a double.

Final Points Table :

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
AUSTRALIA	2	2	0	0	27	1	26	6
Papua New Guinea	2	0	1	1	1	14	-13	1
Solomon Islands	2	0	1	1	0	13	-13	1

from the

dressing sheds

by Mark Stavroulakis

ASA REVIEWS APPLICATION TIMETABLE APL

The Australian Soccer Association (ASA) announced further details of the timetable for prospective applicants to submit registrations of interest in the proposed new national competition.

In doing so, ASA stated that it had engaged the services of MI Associates Pty Ltd, Project Management Consultants, to work closely with ASA management to finalise an Information Memorandum to be made available to prospective applicants.

The Information Memorandum will detail the application process and also provide relevant information to assist applicants in finalising their submissions.

Concurrently, meetings have also been held with potential commercial and broadcast partners and their reaction to the proposed structure and format of the new national competition has been encouraging.

The timetable to commence the application process will be as follows:

· The week commencing 3 May 2004, advertisements will be placed in the national, metropolitan and regional press in Australia and national press in New Zealand seeking registrations of interest from prospective applicants, who will have until 14 May to register such interest.

· Once prospective applicants have been identified, an Information Memorandum will be made available.

· Applicants will then be provided with a 4 - 6 week period to enable formal applications to be lodged.

· This will be followed by a period of evaluation and discussions with applicants, the length of which will be determined by the number and quality of applications received.

ASA is hopeful that this process can be concluded by the end of August 2004.

Chief Executive Officer of ASA, John O'Neill said, "The enormity of the task before us in establishing a viable, sustainable and attractive national competition should not be underestimated, thus it is vital that we get the process right.

If this necessitates the timetable's extension beyond what was originally envisaged, then it is to everyone's benefit - a more thorough process enhances the chance of a good outcome."

"The amended timetable also provides us with opportunities to further advance our negotiations with potential television and commercial partners so that we are in a better position to provide more definitive information to applicants."

"Prospective applicants should be encouraged by the extent to which ASA is addressing this critical topic, notwithstanding the amended timetable."

ADELAIDE ON THE OUTER?

Strong rumours have circulated that Adelaide United could well abandon next year's Australian Premier League.

Tired of waiting for things to happen, United and its board have been fed up with the way in which the new competition has been so-called run.

News will soon filter through from the 'City of churches', on what will happen but rest assured, with more delays in the APL's dealings, United will not be there.

This could prove to be a bombshell for the new league as Adelaide were both a standout team on and off the pitch this season.

MORI GONE

News out of South Australia has it that Damian Mori is almost certain to sign on with Adelaide United for next season's APL.

The Perth Glory marksman has been Australian soccer's most deadliest attacker of all time having made 411 NSL appearances and scoring 225 goals not to mention the fact that he did leave these shores for a year's stint in Germany with Budesliga outfit Moenchengladbach.

Mori has returned to Adelaide from Perth since the end of the NSL season and it is believed that United have been in strong talks with the former Socceroo.

Damian's main aim is to keep the boots on in the long off-season by playing for a respective South Australian club until the new APL kick's off.

His former club, Adelaide City, currently in the South Australian Premier League is said to be on the verge of signing the star striker.

City sport director Charlie Capogreco said that Mori's contract with the Glory ended on June 30 but the club is hoping for a deal that will enable him to play sooner.

Playing in the familiar black and white colours of South Australia's Adelaide City could are on the cards during the off-season for striker Damian Mori.

"He has to sort it out with Nick Tana now. We need somebody with a bit of experience because we've got a lot of young players so he would be great".

This however was all dealt with as Mori was released by the Glory late last week.

Perth Glory Chairman Nick Tana today Damian Mori would be released from his contract so he could begin the next stage of his career in Adelaide.

"Damian has been fantastic for this club," said Mr Tana. "In each of his four seasons he has been the leading scorer for the team – that says it all.

"With the exciting opportunities being presented by the new national competition Damian has had an offer to move back to Adelaide and Perth Glory would not stand in his way.

"I understand the move will offer him opportunities both on and off the field and I wish him every success for the future.

"Perth Glory is now pursuing a number of players with an eye to the new competition and as negotiations progress we will release further information when appropriate."

DILEVSKI'S WAY

Its been a rather impressive time for one of Australia's most promising youngsters in midfielder Spase Dilevski.

The 18-year-old has achieved what many believe was unachievable.

Having been capped by the Australian U17 – U20 and now the more recent Olympics squad, Dilevski is certainly a player that is being primmed for a Socceroo spot for 2006.

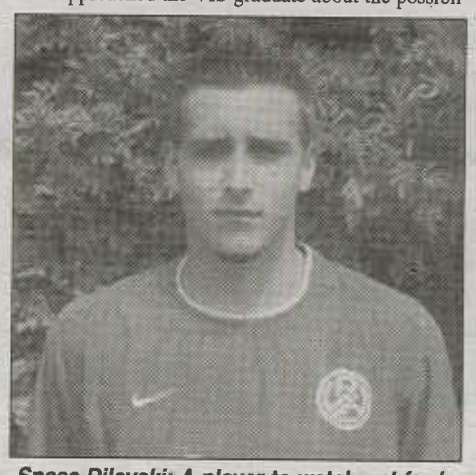
Currently on-loan at Rot-Weiss Essen, Spase has been delighted with his immediate progress towards the top.

Not setting foot in a National League game here in Australia, Dilevski was a graduate at the Victorian Institute of Sport under head-coach Ernie Merrick.

It was at the VIS the youngster realised his potential and through Merrick's tutalage, become one of this countries brightest young stars.

So much was his sudden rise to fame that other countries realised in the potential Spase had and asked for his services.

The National Team of Macedonia a few seasons back approached the VIS graduate about the possibility of playing for their side. Dilevski declined a chose to play for the U17 Joeys who at that time played their World Cup Finals in Trinadad & Tobago.



Spase Dilevski: A player to watch out for in a hopeful Socceroo jersey.

Currently playing for Rot-Weiss Essen, Spase learned a lot from his move from Dutch giants PSV Eindhoven.

It was at PSV (his first move from the VIS), that the Melbourne born star saw first hand what professionalism really is in the game of football.

From the looks of things Dilevski is primming up for maybe a hopeful selection into Frank Farina's Socceroo squad in the not too distant future as that is the only National Team the youngster has yet to play for.

SASF considers increasing NSL player quota

The South Australian Soccer Federation is considering increasing the NSL player quota for Premier and State League clubs.

Currently local sides can only field one NSL player with the only exception being Adelaide United players who are returning back to their original local club. However with there being no NSL competition for up to 18 months, there has been a mini rush of NSL players returning back to Adelaide in addition to the Adelaide United squad. While the big name NSL players will be snapped up by local sides, many of the lesser players may find it difficult to find a club.

The SASF is now considering increasing the NSL player quota to two or three players per club.

The changes are not likely to make a big difference to the local league because the big clubs are already full of NSL standard players and those players who will benefit from the changes are the lesser lights of the NSL.

MELBOURNE DUO SET TO TAKE VSF TO COURT

Star duo Con Boutsianis and George Goutzioulis are set to take the Victorian Soccer Federation to court after they were prevented from playing in the state's local competitions this season. Both players want to join State First Division club Heidelberg United, but a law preventing NSL players to join local clubs has so far prevented them from doing so.

"I'm out of contract, playing is my fulltime occupation and I'm being prevented from joining the club of my choice; it wouldn't happen anywhere else in the world," Goutzioulis told the Herald-Sun. The case is being taken up by the PFA and representative John Didulica added, "It's more than restraining a player from earning a livelihood; there's serious long-term welfare issues involved.

"If a George Goutzioulis or Con Boutsianis or Joe Spiteri is prevented from playing, it puts in real jeopardy their chances of getting a contract with the new Australian Premier League." Former Marconi striker Spiteri hopes to join Fawkner, which plays in the Victorian Premier League. The VSF says they have relaxed the law for the VPL, but won't do the same for the lower leagues.

VALE - ANDREW LEDERER

The *Australian & British Soccer Weekly* was saddened by the passing away of long time soccer identity Andrew Lederer at the age of 85 after a long illness.

Mr Lederer, a successful businessman in the food industry, was a key figure in the Hakoah/Sydney City club and was instrumental in the formation of the National Soccer League in 1977 along with good friend and current ASA Chairman Mr Frank Lowy.

He was part of the Board during the club halcyon days of Sydney City as they quickly established themselves as the benchmark club in the league with three successive Championships.

He also served as the Socceroo team manager to Frank Arok and Eddie Thomson for a number of years in the early-mid 1980's and was also a life member of the Soccer Australia.

His funeral service was held last Thursday at Chevra Kadisha in Woollahra.

May He Rest In Peace.

photooftheweek

Stuck in the middle of a Manchester United defence would not be the best place to be on the ground as this certain English Premier League found out.

Cries for help were certainly hard at Old Trafford when the player was sent for six well after this incident.

Green and Gold Army Series

Green & Gold Army
http://www.ggarmy.com

SOCCERNOOS

GGArmy Shopping is here!!!

The GGArmy department store is now open. We have new and improved Bucket hats and T-Shirts that will be ready for the Turkey matches – order through our secure on-line store NOW to ensure pick up or delivery in time for the upcoming Turkey friendlies.

The GGArmy have also struck an exclusive deal for pre-release copies of the new Socceroos Anthem from the Music Men and are also taking pre-orders for a 1974 style retro Socceroos top, logon and checkout the whole new shopping facility at GGArmy.com.

Oceania Qualifiers

The most likely venue for the upcoming Oceania Nations Cup is Adelaide which is expected to confirmed shortly. With the help of 'The Stand' the GGArmy will be supporting the boys in force. The Socceroos will play against NZ first up with a full strength line up on Friday May 28th. We hope to organise a bus trip from Melbourne for a match or two. Keep an eye on GGArmy.com for updates.

Dukes and Kewell are committed – are you?

After some initial teething problems, tickets in the GGArmy area for the Turkey Friendlies are selling fast! Viduka and Kewell have committed to the matches as have the rest of the side – now it's YOUR turn.

To access seating in the Green and Gold Army section you must quote the code 'GGARMY' from the relevant ticket agencies.

Friday May 21 Aussie Stadium 7.30pm
Tickets on Sale now in our Bays 1-3
TICKETEK (02) 9266 4800
*This offer is only available OVER THE COUNTER or PHONE

Monday May 24 Telstra Dome 7.30pm
Tickets on sale now in our Bays 25-28
www.ticketmaster7.com.au

*This offer is only available ONLINE or OVER THE COUNTER only.

For those who have accessed tickets in non-GGArmy areas (Bays 47,48,1 or 2 at Telstra Dome) we apologise for any mis-communication and misunderstanding as this was beyond our control but we have some good news. You can swap your tickets for seats in the GGArmy areas of Bays 25-28 by simply dropping into your local outlet.

Plains, Trains and Automobiles – GGArmy style

Depending on your budget, there are a number of ways of getting to these games across Australia. If you're looking to head from Sydney to Melbourne or vice versa for the games, here are some train specials that will ensure you are with fellow soccer fans.

For Canberra folk

We are organising a hit and run mission from the capital leaving at around 3pm on Friday May 21. The bus will then leave straight after the game and arrive back in the early hours of Saturday. The price is only $25 and to confirm your spot simply e-mail juniorleague@soccercanberra.com.au

For Melburnians and Sydneysiders

CountryLink have these great offers available by calling 13 22 22 – ensure you quote Carriage G $58.30 one way. 14-day advance purchase fare.

Sydney Match (Quote Carriage "G"):

Depart Melb Spencer St 7:45pm Thurs 20th May
Arrive Syd Central 6:25am Fri 21st May

Depart Syd Central 7:43am Sat 22nd May
Arrive Melb Spencer St 6:28pm Sat 22nd May

Melbourne Match (Quote Carriage "G")
Depart Syd Central 8:43pm Sun 23rd May
Arrive Melb Spencer St 7:00am Mon 24th May

Depart Melb Spencer St 8:30am Tues 25th May
Arrive Syd Central 7:13pm Tues 25th May

And of course there are still some advance purchase flights available – BOOK NOW.
For those interested in group accommodation for the Sydney game contact admin@ggarmy.com immediately as this will be booked no later than Monday 26/4

Pre-match Functions

Wondering where to wet your whistle before the game with your GGArmy comrades? Details of all pre-match functions for Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide are coming shortly - keep checking www.ggarmy.com for details.

Make sure you are decked out in the green and gold for these games and remember we want energy from everyone – bring your flags and banners and get ready to roar!!

Who will bolster the Olyroos in Athens?

By Mark van Aken

After insisting time and again that he wouldn't, Frank Farina has made the decision to include the allowed 3 'over-age' players in the Olyroos squad for Athens.

Farina's argument against the inclusion of Socceroos amongst the Under 23's was that it had the potential to unbalance the team. A sound argument for most teams, but less so for Australia who play so few matches together.

The national coach has also pointed out that historically the Olyroos worst performances came when they did use seniors, most recently illustrated by our failure to even win one game in Sydney.

So why now after the better part of 18 months of planning without them do we have players like Viduka, Neill and even Cahill in the mix? Because it is irresistible. The Olympics are the second biggest stage in the world behind that other one that we can't seem to step up to. Olympic Football dwarfs the rest of the Olympics in terms of support at the stadiums and on television and it represents a golden opportunity, pun most definitely intended, to put Australian football at the forefront.

So now that he can pick them, which Socceroos should Frank Farina pluck from the shelves of the Socceroo supermarket? It will need to be someone that first and foremost wants to go, which is stating the obvious but would probably put a line through most players names.

If the Olyroos have a particular weakness then this is a unique opportunity to cover it, albeit with a band-aid. Considering the Olyroos have only played against quality opposition less than a handful of times (and yes I'm including New Zealand as a 'quality' side there) it's hard to get a reading on any real faults.

While it's difficult to assess the team after the romps in the park that were the first part of the Oceania Qualifiers in January, the two-legged final against the Kiwis showed that the team had a sound defensive mid field and back four, even after losing captain Ljubo Milicevic. Where we did lack potency is up front, at least in the big games – highlighted again with a recent 0-0 result against Greece.

Ahmed Elrich showed his lightening speed and silky skills in January and it earned him a call up to the Socceroos. He has a chance to shine in Athens but he can't do it alone. Alex Brosque is a great young talent and will no doubt be a main stay of the Socceroos in years to come but not just yet. In contrast to his efforts with the Young Socceroos, Brosque's from with the Olyroos was inconsistent and at times he appeared to be punching above his weight. He should be one of the first picked for Athens but not relied on to be the attacking spark for 90 minutes each game.

If we are to bolster up front, whom would we choose? Surely Viduka's big aging body could do without a fortnight in the sweltering Athens heat, especially now he is likely to be at football's equivalent of Centrelink with Leeds looking down the barrel of the First Division. It is an opportunity for guys like Aloisi and Agostino, so long the second fiddle strike force, to represent Australia on a big platform.

Tim Cahill may well like to have more time wearing in his newly acquired green and gold shirt; Farina and his staff would not sneeze at his instinct around goal. Then there is the prodigal Socceroo, Simon Colosimo who silenced the critics (one of them might be writing this column) with his masterful display in the middle for the Socceroos against Venezuela.

Others like Brett Emerton would be in the mix. His added incentive may be that he was captain of the Olyroos team who so dramatically crashed and burned at Sydney. The final question is in goal. Brad Jones has kept for Middlesborough in important senior fixtures this year and Eugene Galekovic is an ample back up.

Considering our quality of stocks at all levels in this country we are not likely to engage an over-age keeper. This said, this is a great chance to get Joe Didiluca into an Australian shirt, and the Olympics is a big forum for him to say no to. It may not be a great idea, but is an idea none the less.

Over all Frank Farina has a selection headache on his hands. All eyes will be on the players he selects and no doubt the punters and pundits will be all too ready to criticize if he gets it wrong.

With such a host of quality players at his disposal it would however be hard to do this. Here's hoping Frank and the squad get the mix right and the Aussies can challenge for a medal this August.

Missing in action: Olyroos skipper Ljubo Milicevic is battling against injury and will not take part in their friendly match against Tunisia tomorrow.

The Lions — 2003 Champions of Queensland
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QLD Premier League - Round 8

By Glenn Davis

Former cellar dwellers Brisbane Wolves broke a five-match drought to move off the bottom of the Brisbane premier league table with a 3-nil win over Souths at Wakerly Park on Saturday night.

The win was the worst possible scenario for the Peter Bannon coached Souths which could pitch them into an unwanted dogfight for premier league survival unless circumstances change dramatically.

While Souths were down and out at half time, things went from bad to worse in the final half hour when Brett Richardson and Mark Riley were sent off for the home side.

Wynnum, which had only won one of its previous six games in the opening round, got off to a brilliant start with two goals in the opening 15 minutes before going to the break with an unassailable three nil lead.

The Wolves suitably punished a defensive error from Souths in the 10th minute when Matt Hilton stunned the home side for the opening goal.

Five minutes later Mark Hines whipped in a low cross for midfielder Matt Lyell to score at the far post for a shock 2-nil lead so early in the match.

Wynnum virtually had the match sewn up at the break when Hilton raced onto a diagonal ball from Brisbane strikers forward Adam Webber before chipping the keeper from 25 metres.

Wynnum coach Kevin Meacock believes his side deserved the three points and is confident of a late charge before the season reaches the half way mark next month.

The recent signing of Webber will be a major boost for the Wolves.

"We played well, particularly in the first half and the inclusion of Adam Webber to our ranks will make a big difference," Meacock said.

"He's big and strong and will give us a lot more strength up front.

"Our position on the table looks bad but our games have been a closer than a lot of people think.

"A couple of small things have cost us in a few games and hopefully the inclusion of Webber will solve that.

"We still have four games to go for us before we reach the half way mark and we can start to challenge the top teams if we can pick up wins in those remaining games."

With no fixtures played next weekend due to Cup matches, Wynnum will celebrate their return to form with an overseas trip next weekend to play the Solomon Islands national side.

"We've got Olympic in the Cup and we'll field a side against them but the first team will be in the Solomons," Meacock said.

Bannon would not comment on the controversial send offs, other than to say he would let others make their own call.

"We got off to a bad start with a gift goal and you can't do that in this league," Bannon said.

"It's hard to come back when you're down 2-nil after only 15 minutes and you can see the heads drop.

"I was pleased with our second half effort, even with nine men, but it was too late then.

"We're in a dog fight now which we didn't want to be in."

Second last placed North Star also caused a minor upset when they held second placed Mitchelton to a thrilling 3-all draw at O'Callaghan Park.

Mitchelton looked set for its sixth win of the season after leading 1-nil at halftime following an individual goal from Ettiene Mermer who dribbled 35 metres through the North Star defence to break the deadlock.

The visitors went 2-nil up on the hour when Nick Kuyper scored from the penalty spot after Mermer was fouled in the box.

North Star staged a stunning fight back to level the match at 2-all through Chris Disipio and Stu McLaren, who scored from a 25 metres free kick.

Jason Podgee squared a ball inside for Mermer for his second goal to give Mitchelton a 3-2 lead but then North Star again equalised with 15 minutes to go after a fluke goal from Brendan Donahue.

Donahue got a horror bounce inside the box and managed to score the equaliser off his shin.

Mitchelton coach Greg Brown was disappointed to let two points slip through their grasp.

"We were two nil up and cruising but we let them back in," Brown said.

"Once they got their first goal they put a lot of pressure on us.

"The free kick McLaren scored was a regular save for any keeper but Ben Wicks took his eye off the ball and it slipped straight through his fingers.

"It was a disappointing goal but Ben has been in outstanding form all season.

"When we got 3-2 up with five minutes remaining I still thought we had it won but it took a lucky goal of a shin for a draw."

Brown said Mitchelton did enough to win including a shot from Richard Iwai, which hit the crossbar when the visitors were leading 3-2 late in the game.

"We were on top except for the last 20 minutes and should have done better," he said.

"We stopped playing too early to defend our lead."

North Star coach Ken swan was proud of his young side's performance.

"We let ourselves down in the first half so I gave them a blast at halftime and we played a lot better after the break," Swan said.

"We had five or six chances which didn't go it."

Palm Beach stayed third but within two points of Mitchelton after a hard fought 2-1 away win over Easts at Heath Park.

Russel Miner gave the visitors a shock start lobbing the keeper for a 1-nil lead after two minutes before Easts hit back through Danny Flaskas who cut in and rounded his defender before striking from 20 metres.

Palm Beach's Gerard Brown scored the winner against his former club midway through the second half.

"It was a hard game on a hard ground," said Palm Beach coach Karl Herdle.

"They should dig up the pitch and replace it with concrete to make it softer."

Herdle believes his sides short passing game contributed to Palm Beach's fourth win.

"We got our pattern right from the start and outplayed them," Herdle said.

"They played a lot of long balls n behind the fence and to their credit they do it well.

"But our short passing game was too quick for them."

Easts coach Col Bennett believed a draw would have been a fitting result.

"We needed to win to stay in touch with the top four but Palm Beach are now four points ahead," he said.

"I thought we did enough to earn a point."

Queensland Lions stretched its lead to seven points at the top of the table from nearest rival Mitchelton with a 2-1 win against Taringa at Jack Speare Park.

Queensland Lions had to rely on a late winner from Craig Slaughter and also played the last ten minutes with only ten men after Michael Baird was sent off.

Greg Di Losa had put Lions in front during the first half but the young Taringa side kept the pressure on Lions and equalised through Reza Aysen.

It wasn't until ten minutes form the end that Slaughter dented Taringa's hopes of an upset with his match winner.

Taringa coach Alan Waller was proud of his young side, which went close to producing the upset of the season.

"It was great team effort and the young boys really stood up and played as well as their opponents," Waller said.

"We made Lions work hard for that result and we worked just as hard as they did. We had some chances but just didn't pull the trigger when needed."

Lions' coach Miron Bleiberg was very complimentary of Taringa.

"That was the hardest game we have had all year and full credit to them for their effort," Bleiberg said.

"The goal they scored to equalise meant we weren't able to dominate the second half like we have done before and they kept coming at us."

The clash between Rochedale and Brisbane City was postponed following a lighting failure at Spencer Park.

Results & Tables

Premier League

Eastern Suburbs 1 (Flaskas) v **Palm Beach 2** (Miner, Brown)
Half-time 1-1

North Star 3 (Di Sipio, McLaren, Donahue) v **Mitchelton 3** (Iwai 2, Kuyper)
Half-time 0-1

Souths United 0 v **Brisbane Wolves 3** (M Hilton 2, Lyell)
Half-time 0-3

Taringa Rovers 1 (Aysen) v **Queensland Lions 2** (DiLosa, Slaughter)
Half-time 0-1

Brisbane City v Rochedale Rovers
Match postponed due to lighting failure

Toowoomba Raiders v Pine Rivers
Not available due to late kick-off

	P	W	L	D	For	Ag	Pts
Queensland Lions	8	8	0	0	35	4	24
Mitchelton	8	5	1	2	18	10	17
Palm Beach	8	4	2	2	18	10	14
Rochedale Rovers	7	3	2	2	12	13	11
Pine Rivers	7	3	2	7	11	18	11
Eastern Suburbs	8	3	4	1	10	13	10
Brisbane City	7	3	3	1	9	12	10
Brisbane Wolves	7	2	4	1	12	17	7
Toowoomba	6	2	3	1	4	12	7
Souths United	8	2	5	1	7	17	7
North Star	8	1	5	2	7	14	5
Taringa Rovers	8	1	6	1	13	16	4

Premier Reserves

North Star 2 Mitchelton 2, Souths United 3 Brisbane Wolves 4, Taringa Rovers 0 Queensland Lions 2, Eastern Suburbs 2 Palm Beach 4, Toowoomba Raiders 4 Pine Rivers 0, Brisbane City 0 Rochedale Rovers 3

Premier Youth

North Star 2 Mitchelton 0, Souths United 0 Brisbane Wolves 0, Taringa Rovers v Queensland Lions (playing Monday), Eastern Suburbs 1 Palm Beach 5, Toowoomba Raiders 3 Pine Rivers 1, Brisbane City 0 Rochedale Rovers 2

Division 1

Beenleigh 4 Redlands 2, Peninsula Power 1 Southside Eagles 1, The Gap 2 Capalaba 2, Brisbane Olympic v Albany Creek (late kick-off), Rocklea 0 Mt Gravatt 4, Uni of Qld 1 Ipswich Knights 1

	P	W	L	D	For	Ag	Pts
Brisbane Olympic	7	6	0	1	13	2	19
Peninsula Power	8	5	1	2	18	8	17
Uni of Qld	8	4	1	3	22	9	15
Beenleigh	8	4	2	2	17	9	14
Ipswich Knights	8	4	3	1	13	9	13
Redlands United	8	3	3	2	15	12	11
Southside Eagles	8	3	3	2	13	13	11
Mt Gravatt	8	3	4	1	14	12	10
The Gap	8	1	2	5	13	18	8
Albany Creek	7	1	5	1	12	20	4
Rocklea United	8	1	6	1	5	23	4
Capalaba	8	1	6	1	5	25	4

Div 1 Reserves

Beenleigh 0 Redlands 0, Peninsula Power 2 Southside Eagles 0, The Gap 4 Capalaba 2, Brisbane Olympic 0 Albany Creek 1, Rocklea 0 Mt Gravatt 2, Uni of Qld 3 Ipswich Knights 1

Division 1 Youth

Beenleigh1 Redlands 1, Peninsula Power 7 Southside Eagles 0, The Gap 1 Capalaba 2, Brisbane Olympic 1 Albany Creek 6, Rocklea 0 Mt Gravatt 2, Uni of Qld 4 Ipswich Knights 1

Division 2

Grange Thistle 3 Samford 1, Newmarket 2 Annerley 2, Moggill 2 North Pine 2, Goodna 7 Oxley 0, Slacks Creek 1 Bethania 5, Ipswich City 0 Brisbane Force 1

Division 2 Reserves

Grange Thistle 1 Samford 0, Newmarket 2 Annerley 2, Moggill 1 North Pine 4, Goodna 3 Oxley 2, Slacks Creek 1 Bethania 3, Ipswich City 0 Brisbane Force 0

Metro 1

Souths United 3 Brisbane Wolves 2, Taringa Rovers 1 Acacia Ridge 6, Wilston 3 Pineapple Rovers 3, Mitchelton 2 Uni of Qld 3, Clairvaux 2 Park Ridge 3, Bayside 1 Darra Lions 3

Metro 2

Redcliffe PCYC 1 Brighton 1, Pine Hills 0 Mooroondu 1, The Gap 2 Brisbane Toro 3, Newmarket 1 Logan City Kings 3, Pine Rivers 5 Ridge Hills 1

Metro 3

Souths United 1 Pine Hills 2, Grange Thistle 0 Pineapple Rovers 1, Newmarket 6 Acacia Ridge 3, Clairvaux 3 Eastern Suburbs 2 , North Pine 0 Uni of Qld 5, Bayside 1 Darra Lions 8

Metro 4

Brisbane Force 4 Southside Eagles 2, Beenleigh 5 Newmarket 6, Taringa Rovers 2 Acacia Ridge 1, Mt Gravatt 5 The Gap 0, Brisbane City v Regents Park (postponed), Slacks Creek 0 Old Bridge 4

Metro 5

North Star 6 Annerley 0, Clairvaux 5 Brighton 9, Brisbane Olympic 0 Newmarket 4, Albany Creek 2 Ridge Hills 0, Slacks Creek 4 Eastern Suburbs 0, Ipswich City 2 Redlands 3

Metro 6

Brisbane Wolves 3 Regents Park 5, Camira 3 Mt Gravatt 0, Goodna Park 0 Park Ridge 1, Albany Creek 7 Mooroondu 2

Open Youth

Queensland Lions 6 Bethania 0, Souths United 9 North Pine 1, Toowoomba 2 Rochedale Rovers 0, Slacks Creek 1 Brisbane Force 1

ITALIAN SERIE A

ITALIAN AFFAIR

By Joe Russo

The Lazio-Roma derby was played last week after the original one was suspended a few weeks ago in the most disgraceful of circumstances. For the record it ended 1-1.

Without going over too much on some old ground, the original match was suspended when fans made their way onto the pitch and an appallingly false rumour, that a child had been run over and killed by police, had circulated the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

The mid-week match last week did not really appear to be a sufficient penalty for both clubs and their fans. The result probably ensured that AC Milan wins the Scudetto.

The Stadio Olimpico was full of supporters, except for the few that were arrested after the original match because they had to report to police at the time that this game was on.

Roma were given a two-match ban from using their home ground plus a fine of approximately $A 5,000. Lazio were fined approximately $A 80,000 without any ban on the use of their home ground which is also the Stadio Olimpico. It hardly seemed enough for both sides.

The real surprise was that this second game was not played behind closed doors. Let's remember that 153 police officers were injured as a result of the original match which was marred by some of the most disgraceful scenes witnessed both inside and outside a football stadium in recent years in Italy.

****

Perugia have threatened not to play their last four Serie A matches because of unfavourable refereeing decisions. Whether they change their mind is irrelevant because the threat itself is absolutely farcical. And at the centre of this farce is Luciano Gaucci.

Gaucci is the President of Perugia and also the President of Catania in Serie B and Sambenedettese in Serie C1. He is one of the most outspoken characters in Italian football but also a terribly selfish and egotistical person.

His latest demand was that the President of the Italian Football Federation, Franco Carraro, resigns otherwise Perugia would not continue this year. Hardly the behaviour of a rational person but it doesn't really matter because Perugia is virtually relegated anyway on performances

According to Gaucci's twisted logic there is some plot against smaller teams and in particular his Perugia. The Federation predetermined all the marginal refereeing decisions that have not favoured Perugia. Incredible!

Gaucci is so egotistical and insecure that he constantly fears some imaginary plot. Referees are humans who can make mistakes and people who claim some plot against smaller teams in favour of major teams, are merely adding fuel to Gaucci's fire.

Gaucci is the same person who did not accept Catania' relegation to Third Division from Serie B last summer. As a result of his legal challenge he delayed the start of the season and forced the Federation to expand the Serie B to 24 teams from the normal 20.

This expanded Serie B competition will now have a major impact on the Serie A for years to come. Next year the Serie A will expand to 20 teams from 18 to accommodate this hastily made decision. It is probably about time that Gaucci took himself away from football in Italy but this is unlikely. He had no regard for Perugia the club, its players and staff, and the city and its citizens. He simply decided that he would announce Perugia's withdrawal.

His behaviour is comparable to that of a spoilt little boy who threatens to take the ball home and end the game, simply because he owns it, if his friends don't agree that he has scored a goal or allow him to interpret the rules his way!

****

Christian Vieri refused to sit on the bench for Inter in their recent match against Bologna. Vieri played it down afterwards saying it was better that he trained during that time rather sitting on the bench.

It is an open secret that Vieri has had no rapport with Inter coach Alberto Zaccheroni since he took over the team during the season from Hector Cuper.

Vieri in recent years has been the driving force behind Inter and it would appear rather strange that Zaccheroni has had so little appreciation of his talents.

However, it really no longer matters. Vieri will not be playing for Inter next year and with only a few little formalities to overcome he will return to Juventus where he played in 1996/97.

It was at Juventus that Vieri established himself as a world class player before transferring to Atletico Madrid, Lazio and then Inter.

****

NSW readers can tune into 98.5 FM on Sunday nights at 10.00pm for all the latest soccer news locally and abroad with myself, Joseph Carlucci, Mark Stavroulakis, Robert Scarselletta and Stuart Jones.

UDINESE 0
AC MILAN 0

AC Milan's march towards the title suffered a setback as they were held to a goalless draw at Udinese.

A win would have put the Rossoneri within touching distance of their 17th Scudetto, which they remain strong favourites to win, but it never looked likely as the teams cancelled each other out.

Milan substitute Jon Dahl Tomasson came close to winning the game deep into injury-time, his lob over Udinese goalkeeper Morgan De Sanctis falling agonisingly wide of the left post.

AS ROMA 3
EMPOLI 0

Roma recorded an impressive 3-0 home win over Empoli to reduce Milan's lead to six points.

Roma superstar Francesco Totti scored for Roma after 41 and 89 minutes, sandwiching John Carew's strike.

Carew had an eventful match, despite featuring for just five minutes.

He came off the bench after 63 minutes, scored his goal a minute later, and then in the 68th minute was red-carded along with Empoli's Jorge Vargas after the pair scuffled.

Empoli have now ventured further into relegation trouble and look set to drop to Serie B.

JUVENTUS 3
LECCE 4

Third-placed Juventus suffered a shock 4-3 reverse in their Stadio Delle Alpi where Lecce produced the most remarkable performance of the day.

Daniele Franceschini scored and Axel Konan netted twice in the first half as Lecce took a 3-1 lead into the interval.

David Trezeguet had struck Juve's goal, but they conceded again after the break when Lecce's most prized asset, striker Javier Chevanton, put the away side 4-1 up.

Juve claimed a goal back when Enzo Maresca, standing in a crowd of players, managed to head home fellow substitute Alessandro Del Piero's free-kick.

Del Piero then hit the target himself in the 79th minute with a clever turn and low shot to bring Juve to within one goal.

SERIE B

Verona 1 Palermo 2, Albinoleffe 2 Torino 2, Bari 2 Avellino 1, Catania 2 Pescara 0, Como 0 Triestina 0, Genoa 1 Salernitana 2, Napoli 0 Atalanta 0, Piacenza 1 Cagliari 2, Treviso 1 Ternana 1, Vicenza 2 Ascoli 3, Fiorentina 2 Messina 0, Venezia 3 Livorno 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1.Palermo	**39**	**18**	**14**	**7**	**60**	**-34**	**68**
2.Atalanta	39	16	18	5	49	-30	66
3.Cagliari	39	17	14	8	62	-40	65
4.Messina	39	17	14	8	54	-37	65
5.Livorno	39	16	16	7	61	-40	64
6.Fiorentina	39	16	14	9	46	-41	62
7.Piacenza	39	15	16	8	37	-29	61
8.Triestina	39	14	17	8	46	-41	59
9.Ternana	39	14	14	11	50	-42	56
10.Catania	39	15	11	13	44	-43	56
11.Torino	39	12	16	11	48	-42	52
12.Vicenza	39	12	16	11	41	-39	52
13.Napoli	39	9	22	8	27	-34	49
14.Treviso	39	10	17	12	37	-39	47
15.Ascoli	39	11	14	14	42	-46	47
16.Salernitana	39	12	11	16	31	-42	47
17.Genoa	39	11	13	15	40	-46	46
18.Albinoleffe	39	11	12	16	34	-46	45
19.Venezia	39	10	14	15	33	-44	44
20.Pescara	39	10	11	18	32	-52	41
21.Bari	39	10	10	19	41	-53	40
22.Verona	39	9	13	17	41	-58	40
23.Como	39	7	12	20	30	-52	33
24.Avellino	39	5	13	21	40	-56	28

INTER MILAN 0
LAZIO 0

The race for the fourth Champions League place is no clearer after Inter and Lazio drew 0-0.

Inter remain the team in possession, but they lead Lazio and Parma by just a solitary point, which makes a goalless draw at home not a particularly impressive result.

REGGINA 1
PARMA 1

Reggina slipped into the relegation zone after a 1-1 home draw with Parma.

Parma took the lead in just the ninth minute when Australian midfielder Marco Bresciano scored direct from a corner on the right.

But the home side battled back and dominated the remainder of the half, and were rewarded with an equaliser three minutes in the second half.

The goal stemmed from a corner, which was floated into the box by Francesco Cozza for Stefano Torrisi to glance past Frey with the back his head.

MODENA 1
SAMPDORIA 0

Modena moved out of the relegation zone with a narrow 1-0 victory over Sampdoria.

Diomansy Kamara grabbed the only goal of the game in the 58th minute to help Modena climb up a place to 14th.

Vignaroli swung in a cross from the left, and with the visitors' defence in disarray, Kamara ghosted in unmarked at the back post to head home.

BRESCIA 1
PERUGIA 1

Perugia face relegation after a 1-1 stalemate at Brescia - their 14th draw of the season.

Fabrizio Ravanelli put second-bottom Perugia 1-0 up at Brescia, only for Roberto Baggio to salvage a point for the home side with a superb free-kick.

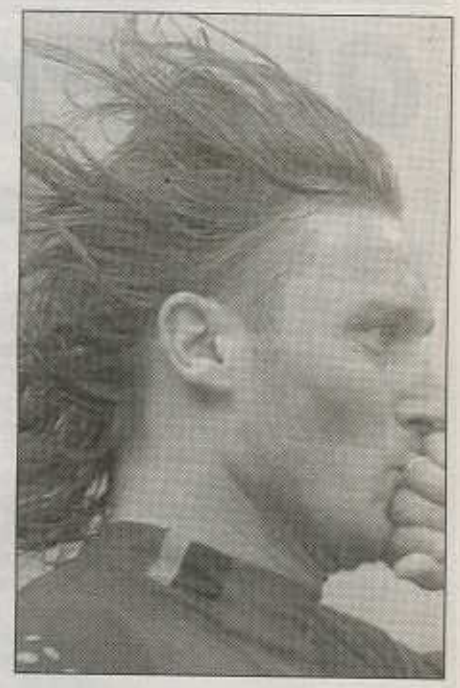
Fabio Petruzzi of Brescia was sent off late in the game.

ANCONA 0
CHIEVO 2

Bottom placed Ancona suffered the 23rd defeat of an embarrassing campaign by losing 2-0 at home to Chievo.

Chievo became the latest of a host of teams to complete the double over this season's whipping boys thanks to second-half goals from Luigi Sala and Franco Semioli.

Udinese's Valerio Bertotto (right) fights for the ball with Milan's Kaka.



Roma captain Francesco Totti celebrates his first goal against Empoli.

BOLOGNA 3
SIENA 1

Bologna virtually secured their safety with a 3-1 home win over Siena.

Samuele Dalla Bona opened the scoring when his shot took a wicked deflection on its way past Siena goalkeeper Marco Fortin.

Claudio Belucci extended the lead on 64 minutes before Siena pulled a goal back after 70 minutes through Michele Mignani.

There was to be no escape though, and Bologna grabbed their third goal after 84 minutes when Carlo Nervo chased Tare's flick-on and fired low past Fortin from eight yards.

FIXTURES

Sunday 2nd May

Parma	vs	Ancona
Empoli	vs	Bologna
Siena	vs	Brescia
Lecce	vs	Inter
Perugia	vs	Juventus
Chievo	vs	Modena
Lazio	vs	Reggina
Milan	vs	Roma
Sampdoria	vs	Udinese

SERIE A

Ancona 0 Chievo 2, Roma 3 Empoli 0, Inter 0 Lazio 0, Juventus 3 Lecce 4, Udinese 0 AC Milan 0, Reggina 1 Parma 1, Brescia 1 Perugia 1, Modena 1 Sampdoria 0, Bologna 3 Siena 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Milan	31	23	7	1	59	20	76
2Roma	31	21	7	3	67	15	70
3Juventus	31	19	6	6	62	40	63
4Inter Milan	31	15	8	8	54	33	53
5Lazio	31	15	7	9	48	34	52
6Parma	31	14	10	7	50	41	52
7Udinese	31	12	10	9	37	34	46
8Sampdoria	31	11	12	8	39	37	45
9Bologna	31	10	8	13	43	48	38
10Chievo	31	9	10	12	31	35	37
11Brescia	31	7	13	11	47	52	34
12Lecce	31	9	7	15	38	53	34
13Siena	31	7	10	14	37	49	31
14Modena	31	6	12	13	25	39	30
15Reggina	31	5	15	11	25	41	30
16Empoli	31	6	9	16	21	49	27
17Perugia	31	3	14	14	39	55	23
18Ancona	31	1	7	23	18	65	10

ENGLISH

TOTTENHAM 2
ARSENAL 2

Arsenal were crowned Premiership champions for a third time under Arsene Wenger after a 2-2 draw with arch rivals Tottenham at White Hart Lane.

The Gunners seemed to be set for all three points when goals from Patrick Vieira and Robert Pires gave the visitors a 2-0 half-time lead.

Spurs refused to buckle and got themselves back in the game on 62 minutes when Jamie Redknapp thundered home a long-range strike, giving keeper Jens Lehmann no chance.

The hosts earned a point in stoppage time when Lehmann fouled Robbie Keane to give away a penalty, which the Republic of Ireland striker converted with aplomb.

NEWCASTLE UTD 2
CHELSEA 1

Newcastle skipper Alan Shearer smashed home a stunning long-range effort to hammer the final nail into Chelsea's coffin.

The 33-year-old beat goalkeeper Marco Ambrosio with his 48th-minute wonder-goal and put his side firmly back in the race for Champions League qualification with his 28th goal of a season which is rapidly coming to life for the Magpies.

Joe Cole fired the visitors in front with just five minutes gone, but Shola Ameobi dragged the home side back into it two minutes before the break with an excellent finish.

MANCHESTER UTD 0
LIVERPOOL 1

Liverpool recorded their third win in four seasons at Old Trafford thanks to Danny Murphy who coolly placed a penalty inside the top right corner just past the hour after Gary Neville had brought down Steven Gerrard.

United, whose defeat ended their distant hopes of retaining the title and left them third in the table, hit the woodwork through Ryan Giggs and Louis Saha and substitute Ole Gunnar Solskjaer missed late chances.

FULHAM 2
CHARLTON 0

Midfielder Steed Malbranque fired Fulham in front from the penalty spot in the 18th minute after keeper Dean Kiely had brought down Luis Boa Morte and the Portuguese striker laid on the second for Sean Davis, who volleyed past Kiely in the 64th.

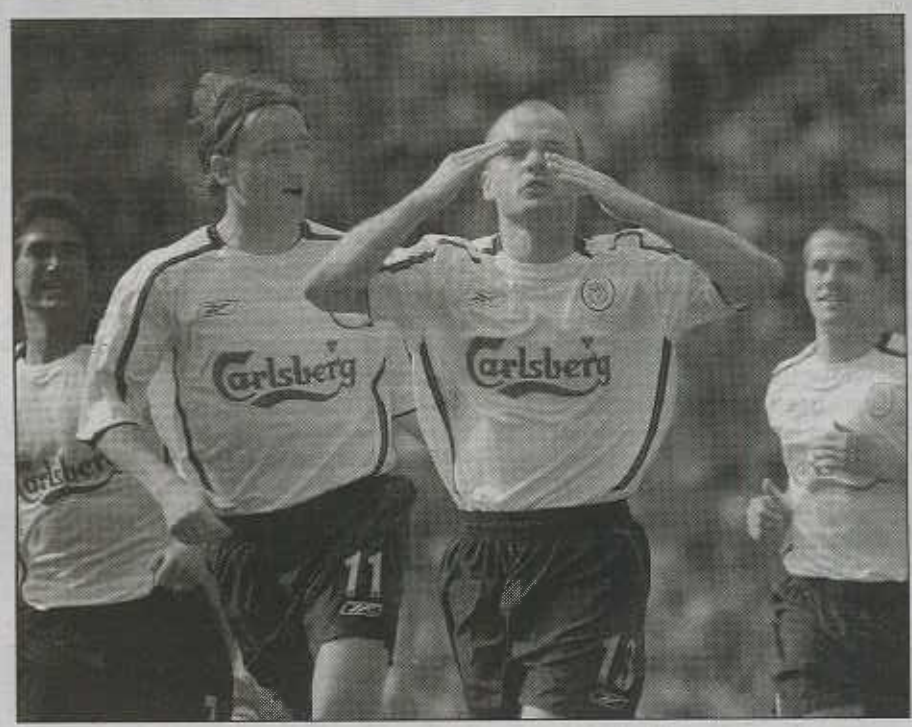
Fulham joined Charlton on 48 points and overtook them in seventh place to retain an outside chance of snatching fourth spot and England's fourth Champions league berth.

LEICESTER CITY 1
MANCHESTER CITY 1

England goalkeeper David James saved a hotly disputed penalty from former Manchester City striker Paul Dickov three minutes from time as both clubs fought for top-flight survival.

German Michael Tarnat put the visitors ahead in the 45th minute with a 35-metre free kick that took a deflection and deceived home goalkeeper Ian Walker.

Leicester equalised with a James Scowcroft header in the 66th and the result left them one place off the bottom with Manchester City six points ahead in 17th place, one above the relegation zone with three games to go.



The Death Kiss: Liverpool Danny Murphy celebrates scoring Liverpool's winner against Manchester United.

MIDDLESBROUGH 1
ASTON VILLA 2

Striker Joseph-Desire Job put Boro ahead in the 41st minute from a pin-point right cross by Gaizka Mendieta and defender Gareth Barry headed an equaliser three minutes into first half injury time from a Thomas Hitzlsperger free kick.

Villa's Peru international Nolberto Solano was sent off early in the second half for a second bookable offence after a touchline clash with George Boateng.

Peter Crouch hit the winner for 10-man Villa one minute from time.

SOUTHAMPTON 1
BOLTON 2

Bolton's Jay Jay Okocha hit the Saints crossbar in the 10th minute before Latvia's Marian Pahars put the home side ahead in the 21st.

The visitors hit back late in the second half with Kevin Nolan heading Bolton level 13 minutes from time and former Saints striker Kevin Davies scoring the winner a minute later.

EVERTON 0
BLACKBURN 1

Jon Stead's header nine minutes from time, set up by fellow striker Andy Cole, settled a tight match after which Blackburn will feel more confident of avoiding relegation as they climbed one point above Everton into 13th place.

BIRMINGHAM CITY 2
WOLVERHAMPTON 2

Wolves are closer to having relegation confirmed despite grinding out a creditable 2-2 draw at Birmingham.

Dave Jones knew his side needed all three points to keep alive any real hopes of survival.

But despite taking a sixth-minute lead through Colin Cameron they couldn't hang on for victory.

Mikael Forssell (34) and Clinton Morrison (41) both netted before the break to give Blues a 2-1 half-time advantage.

And it took a Carl Cort goal 15 minutes from time to snatch a point for Wolves.

They're six points behind Manchester City, again with just three games remaining.

LEEDS UTD 1
PORTSMOUTH 2

Goals from Yakubu and Lomana LuaLua pushed Leeds closer to the relegation trapdoor as Portsmouth claimed a crucial 2-1 win at Elland Road.

Leeds continued to push but aside from the committed Alan Smith, they never looked likely to get back into the game.

However, they were granted a fortunate lifeline with seven minutes left when the impressive Linvoy Primus was adjudged to have tugged Michael Duberry's shirt in the area.

Ian Harte held his nerve to slot the penalty past Shaka Hislop and that set the scene for a frantic finale.

Middlesborough Joseph-Desire Job (left) gets to the ball ahead of Aston Villa's Ronny Johnson.

FIXTURES

Saturday 1st May

Arsenal	v	Birmingham
Aston Villa	v	Tottenham
Blackburn	v	Man Utd
Bolton	v	Leeds
Charlton	v	Leicester
Chelsea	v	Southampton
Liverpool	v	Middlesbrough
Man City	v	Newcastle
Portsmouth	v	Fulham
Wolverhampton	v	Everton

PREMIER LEAGUE

Everton 0 Blackburn 1, Fulham 2 Charlton 0, Leicester City 1 Manchester City 1, Manchester Utd 0 Liverpool 1, Middlesbrough 1 Aston Villa 2, Southampton 1 Bolton 2, Birmingham City 2 Wolverhampton 2, Leeds Utd 1 Portsmouth 2, Newcastle Utd 2 Chelsea 1, Tottenham 2 Arsenal 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	**34**	**24**	**10**	**0**	**69**	**24**	**82**
Chelsea	35	22	6	7	61	29	72
Man Utd	35	22	5	8	61	33	71
Liverpool	35	14	11	10	49	36	53
Newcastle	34	13	14	7	47	34	53
Aston Villa	35	14	10	11	46	41	52
Fulham	35	13	9	13	49	44	48
Charlton	35	13	9	13	44	45	48
Birmingham	35	12	12	11	42	44	48
Bolton	35	12	11	12	42	52	47
Southampton	34	12	9	13	39	35	45
Middlesbrough	35	12	9	14	41	44	45
Blackburn	35	11	7	17	49	57	40
Portsmouth	34	11	7	16	39	48	40
Everton	35	9	12	14	42	48	39
Tottenham	35	11	6	18	44	56	39
Man City	35	7	14	14	48	51	35
Leeds	35	8	8	19	36	71	32
Leicester	35	5	14	16	42	60	29
Wolverhampton	35	6	11	18	35	73	29

FIRST DIVISION

Burnley 1 Derby 0, Coventry 1 Rotherham 1, Crewe 2 Crystal Palace 3, Ipswich 1 Notts Forest 2, Millwall 0 Reading 1, Preston 2 Cardiff 2, Stoke 0 West Ham 2, Walsall 0 Sheffield Utd 1, Watford 1 Norwich 2, West Bromwich 2 Bradford 0, Wigan 0 Sunderland 0, Wimbledon 1 Gillingham 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norwich	**43**	**26**	**10**	**7**	**73**	**35**	**88**
West Brom	43	25	11	7	63	35	86
Sunderland	43	20	12	11	58	43	72
Ipswich	44	21	8	15	82	70	71
West Ham	44	18	16	10	62	44	70
Wigan	44	18	16	10	59	43	70
Crystal Palace	44	20	10	14	70	59	70
Sheffield Utd	44	20	9	15	61	52	69
Reading	44	19	10	15	54	56	67
Millwall	44	17	15	12	54	46	66
Cardiff	44	17	12	15	66	56	63
Coventry	44	15	14	15	60	51	59
Stoke	43	16	11	16	52	54	59
Preston	44	15	13	16	64	65	58
Notts Forest	44	13	15	16	58	58	54
Watford	44	14	12	18	53	64	54
Burnley	44	13	14	17	59	72	53
Crewe	44	14	10	20	55	62	52
Rotherham	44	12	15	17	48	58	51
Gillingham	44	14	8	22	46	62	50
Derby	44	12	13	19	51	66	49
Walsall	44	12	12	20	42	62	48
Bradford	44	10	6	28	38	66	36
Wimbledon	44	7	4	33	39	88	25

SECOND DIVISION

Brentford 1 Wycombe 1, Bristol City 0 Brighton 0, Chesterfield 1 Blackpool 0, Notts County 1 Port Vale 2, Peterborough 0 Bournemouth 1, Plymouth 2 QPR 0, Rushden & Diamonds 0 Hartlepool 2, Sheffield Wed 0 Colchester 1, Stockport 2 Grimsby 1, Swindon 1 Oldham 2, Tranmere 2 Barnsley 0, Wrexham 2 Luton 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plymouth	44	24	12	8	80	40	84
QPR	44	20	17	7	76	44	77
Bristol City	44	21	13	10	55	36	76
Swindon	44	20	12	12	75	56	72
Hartlepool	44	20	12	12	74	57	72
Brighton	44	20	11	13	61	43	71
Port Vale	44	19	10	15	69	62	67
Bournemouth	44	17	14	13	56	50	65
Tranmere	44	16	16	12	56	53	64
Luton	44	16	15	13	66	63	63
Colchester	44	16	13	15	50	54	61
Blackpool	44	16	11	17	56	59	59
Barnsley	44	14	17	13	51	55	59
Wrexham	44	17	8	19	49	57	59
Oldham	44	11	20	13	63	59	53
Sheffield Wed	44	13	14	17	45	58	53
Stockport	44	11	18	15	60	67	51
Brentford	44	13	11	20	51	68	50
Peterborough	44	11	15	18	53	56	48
Rushden & Diamonds	44	13	9	22	60	70	48
Chesterfield	44	11	15	18	48	69	48
Grimsby	44	12	11	21	53	79	47
Notts County	44	10	11	23	49	76	41
Wycombe	44	6	17	21	48	73	35

Fans name Zidane No.1

Simply the best: French star Zinedine Zidane.

A fans poll has named French playmaker Zinedine Zidane the best European soccer player of the last 50 years.

He finished narrowly ahead of Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and Dutchman Johan Cruyff.

The highest placed British player was Bobby Charlton in 14th place, while his old Manchester United team- mate, George Best of Northern Ireland - widely regarded as one of the world's all-time greats - was a surprisingly lowly 19th.

Zidane, polled 123,582 votes, just 1013 more than "Der Kaiser" Beckenbauer, who totalled 122,569, with Cruyff third on 119,332.

Overall, more than 150,000 fans cast a total of seven million votes in the public poll, organised by UEFA to mark the Golden Jubilee of their foundation in 1954.

Votes could only be cast for modern-day players on the UEFA website, after those for former players from each of the five decades had also been tabled.

The final three were announced at a Golden Jubilee ceremony at the start of UEFA's annual congress being held in Limasol, Cyprus for the first time.

They topped a final list of 50 players gradually revealed by UEFA since the start of this year.

Zidane, who will turn 32 during this year's European Championship in Portugal starting in June, is already the FIFA World Player of the Year, an award he won for the third time in December.

Like Beckenbauer, he has won the World Cup and the European Championship with France and the European Cup with Real Madrid.

Players whose careers have not lasted at least 10 years were not included in the poll.

The voting

1. Zinedine Zidane (France)
2. Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)
3. Johan Cruyff (Netherlands)
4. Marco van Basten (Netherlands)
5. Dino Zoff (Italy)
6. Alfredo Di Stefano (Spain)
7. Eusebio (Portugal)
8. Lev Yashin (Soviet Union)
9. Michel Platini (France)
10. Paolo Maldini (Italy)
11. Ferenc Puskas (Hungary)
12. Paolo Rossi (Italy)
13. Ruud Gullit (Netherlands)
14. Bobby Charlton (England)
15. Lothar Matthaeus (West Germany)
16. Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (West Germany)
17. Franco Baresi (Italy)
18. Gerd Mueller (West Germany)
19. George Best (Northern Ireland)
20. Kevin Keegan (England)
21. Frank Rijkaard (Netherlands)
22. David Beckham (England)
23. Bobby Moore (England)
24. Roberto Baggio (Italy)
25. Michael Laudrup (Denmark)
26. Ronald Koeman (Netherlands)
27. Peter Schmeichel (Denmark)
28. Gheorghe Hagi (Romania)
29. Sepp Maier (West Germany)
30. Oliver Kahn (Germany)
31. Luis Figo (Portugal)
32. Raul (Spain)
33. Berti Vogts (West Germany)
34. Johan Neeskens (Netherlands)
35. Gianni Rivera (Italy)
36. Jose Camacho (Spain)
37. Marco Tardelli (Italy)
38. Just Fontaine (France)
39. Peter Shilton (England)
40. Bernd Schuester (West Germany)
41. Raymond Kopa (France)
42. Eric Cantona (France)
43. Stanley Matthews (England)
44. Ruud van Nistelrooy (Netherlands)
45. Valentin Ivanov (Soviet Union)
46. Gary Lineker (England)
47. Alessandro Nesta (Italy)
48. Jose Santamaria (Spain)
49. Alessandro Del Piero (Italy)
50. Alessandro Costacurta (Italy)

Pundit quits over racist slur

Former Manchester United manager Ron Atkinson has resigned as a soccer pundit with British broadcaster ITV after making a racist off-air comment following Tuesday's Champions League match between Chelsea and Monaco.

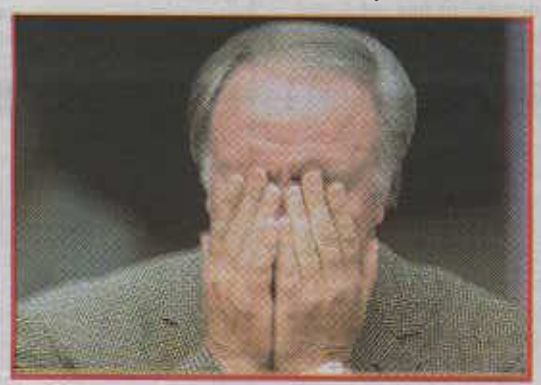
An ITV spokesman said : "We do not in any way condone the comments in question, which were not broadcast as part of ITV's coverage but were made in an off-air conversation after the game.

"It was a regrettable lapse by a respected and experienced broadcaster who has been part of the ITV sports team for many years.

"We have discussed the situation with Ron Atkinson, who is devastated and very sorry for any offence caused by his comments.

"He immediately offered his resignation which we have accepted."

Atkinson is said to have called Chelsea defender Marcel Desailly a "f----- ing lazy nigger' during a post-match conversation with match commentator Clive Tyldesley.



"Did I say that – Doh!!!" – Ron Atkinson was given his marching orders from a radio show after stating a racist remark against Chelsea defender Marcel Dessailly.

It is believed Atkinson's remarks were broadcast by channels in the Middle East where the live feed had continued to run after fulltime.

It is not the first time he has landed in hot water for an unguarded comment – last season he made a derogatory remark about AS Roma's Italian superstar, Francesco Totti, which was broadcast by European television.

The 65-year-old, who also managed Premiership side Aston Villa, apologised for his remarks.

"I made a stupid mistake which I regret it left me no option but to resign. At the moment I can't believe I did it. It was just a moment of stupidity.

"I was very frustrated at the end of the game because I thought Chelsea could have won," said Atkinson.

"I regret making the comments and I apologise to anyone I may have offended."

The use of such inflammatory language by Atkinson was all the more surprising as during the late 1970s, he was at the forefront of giving opportunities to black players when manager of West Bromwich Albion.

His West Brom side regularly featured three black players – the late Laurie Cunningham, Cyrille Regis and Brendon Batson – later a senior official in England's Professional Footballers Association (PFA) in the first eleven.

And Atkinson said that proved he is not a racist.

"If you look at my track record as a manager, I was one of the first managers in the game to give black players a chance."

No bench warming for Italian star Alessandro Del Piero come Euro 2004.

Del Piero targets Portugal

Alessandro Del Piero has vowed to play his way into Italy's Euro 2004 squad in the remaining five games of the season and put an injury-hit campaign behind him.

The Juventus forward is no longer an automatic choice for the Azzurri following two calf injuries that have seen him make only 18 league appearances this term.

And those ailments, coupled with the form of Roma forward Antonio Cassano and Del Piero's club-mate Fabrizio Miccoli, have sparked rumours that Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni could omit Del Piero from his final 23-man squad for Portugal.

Del Piero, though, is determined to silence such talk.

"I am determined to go to Portugal," he said. "I know that my place in the Euro 2004 squad depends on my performance over the last five games.

"There are still two months to go before the tournament, which is a long time."

Del Piero could make his first start for Juve since March in the home clash with Lecce this weekend.

He has scored seven league goals this term, but has rarely reached his best form as Juve crashed out of the Champions League at the second-round stage and lie 12 points behind AC Milan.

F1 drivers honour Senna

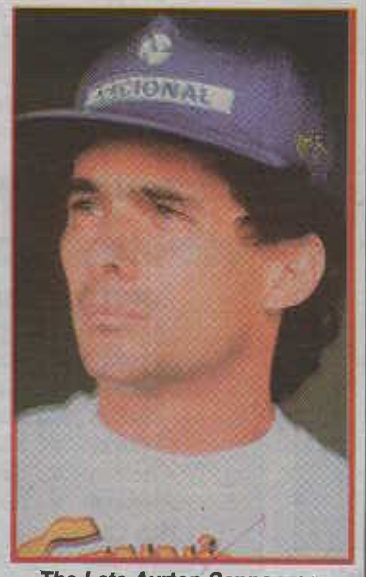
Formula One drivers faced Brazil's winning 1994 World Cup squad in a soccer match held in honour of the 10th anniversary of Ayrton Senna's death last week.

The Brazilian driver was killed in an accident at the San Marino Grand Prix in nearby Imola, which is gearing up for this year's race on Sunday.

F1 champion Michael Schumacher lined up with Brazilian team-mate Rubens Barrichello, Italian Jarno Trulli, Spanish star Fernando Alonso and other drivers against soccer legends Aldair, Dunga, Careca, Leonardo, Marcio Santos, Mazinho and Taffarel - the team that beat Italy on penalties in the USA '94 final.

About 6000 spectators showed up and ticket proceeds went to the Senna Foundation, which aids Brazilian youths.

Vivian Senna, the sister of the killed driver, made the ceremonial kickoff for the match, which ended in a lightheart-ed - but emotional - 5-5 draw.



The Late Ayrton Senna was honoured last week by the '94 Brazilian World Cup team.

Baggio Azzurri farewell

The Pony-Tailed Italian star Roberto Baggio has accepted coach Giovanni Trapattoni's offer to play in Italy's friendly with against Spain this week in a special "farewell" appearance.

"I called him to ask him if would like to and he was pleased," Trapattoni was quoted as saying in last week's Gazzetta dello Sport.

Trapattoni has resisted pressure to call up Baggio since taking over the national team four years ago and kept the pony-tailed striker off Italy's 2002 World Cup squad in the face of widespread criticism.

But since Baggio has indicated he plans to retire at the end of this season, Trapattoni developed the idea of a special "farewell" call up.

Baggio's last match for Italy was a Euro 2000 qualifier with Belarus on March 31, 1999. He has made 55 appearances for the "Azzurri" in all and stands fourth on the team's all-time scoring list with 27 goals.

Roberto Baggio will don the Italian jersey one more time.

SOUTH AMERICA SAMBA

Written and Compiled by Peter Damalas

MARADONA RECOVERING FROM HEART ATTACK

The news from South America has been dominated by the health concerns of perhaps the greatest footballer of all-time, certainly the most notorious, Diego Armando Maradona.

The 43-year old was admitted to a Swiss-Argentine clinic in Buenos Aires last Sunday after suffering chest pains believed to have been sustained at La Bombonera, where Maradona was watching his beloved Boca Juniors take on Nueva Chicago.

Speculation was rife in the media that the heart attack was directly caused by a drug overdose, a claim vehemently denied by his personal doctor Alfredo Cahe.

Medical reports revealed that the ailing former superstar's heart condition was complicated by a lung infection which inhibited his breathing and required him to be sedated and attached to a respirator that aided his breathing.

Maradona was also diagnosed with hypertension and pneumonia, but made steady progress during the week. He was taken off the critical list on Thursday, to the relief of his family and friends, not to mention his loyal fans outside the clinic and around the world.

The pint-sized genius won acclaim when he captained Argentina to victory in the World Youth Championships in 1979, before achieving the ultimate success in Mexico in 1986, a tournament which he alone dominated and scored two of the most famous goals in World Cup history.

Maradona is recovering well after his heart attack scare last week.

He also guided Napoli to two scudettos in Italy (1986-87 and 1989-90).

But his two goals in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final against England displayed the complex nature of his character. While he mesmerised seven players on the way to goal, his "Hand of God" goal remains the most controversial moment in football history, and he has never strayed too far away from the headlines.

His drug addiction, which saw him suspended twice from football, came to a head following his final retirement in 1997, and his weight problems have also been well documented.

Also in the news was Pele, the man voted equal to Maradona in FIFA's all-time greatest player award, who is also recovering from emergency eye surgery to repair a detached retina in his left eye.

BOLTON TO SWOOP FOR SAMBA STARS?

Bolton Wanderers are set to add to their impressive list of gifted individual players after the club confirmed that it had been in contact with veteran Brazilian star Rivaldo over a possible move to the north-west of England.

Rivaldo, 32, fell out with Brazilian champions Cruzeiro in February following the sacking of coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo.

The powerful left-footed playmaker left the club in a show of solidarity with former national coach Luxemburgo, under whom he won the 1999 Copa America, one of many highlights in a hugely successful career.

But in his ten match stint in Belo Horizonte, he did not enjoy a positive relationship with the fans, who were vocal in their criticism of his performances.

The former Barcelona star has played very little football since lifting the 2002 World Cup in Yokohama, falling out with AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti in his debut season in the Italian Serie A.

Rivaldo would certainly be another welcome addition at the Reebok Stadium for the fans at least, but despite settling on a smaller club he may have to fight for a spot in the starting line-up should the move go ahead.

Bolton have created a reputation of sorts for signing creative talents who are closer to the end of their careers than the beginning. Rivaldo will be accompanied by French striker Youri Djorkaeff and Nigerian wizard Augustin Jay Jay Okocha, in a triumvirate of entertainers.

Lucrative moves to Qatar and Japan were also suggested.

Meanwhile, fellow samba striker Marcio Amoroso will also be making a splash in the English Premier League.

The 29-year old former Serie A top scorer severed ties with Borussia Dortmund in March due to arguments surrounding the extent of a knee injury sustained last September.

Four clubs- Middlesborough, Tottenham, Aston Villa and Bolton- have been linked with fhe former Udinese and Parma player. He would certainly be useful to each club as they are all in the process of developing fresh squads.

But it hasn't been all one-way traffic for Brazilians this week.

Middlesborough have released defensive midfielder Ricardinho, formerly of Corinthians, two months early after he failed to make an impression on Teeside.

Samba star Rivaldo (Left) should be a Bolton player in the next few weeks.

The 27-year old was drafted in to the World Cup squad to replace injured captain Emerson, but has been largely confined to the reserves, making the bench just once since he arrived in January- the recent scoreless draw with Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.

BIG TWO IN FRIENDLY ACTION ABROAD

World Cup holders Brazil and fierce rivals Argentina will travel to Hungary and Morocco respectively for friendly matches Thursday morning Eastern Standard Time.

Carlos Alberto Parreira has selected Arsenal midfielder Edu after he expressed a desire to play for England should he continue to be overlooked for the Selecao. The notable omission from the squad is Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo, who is being rested after his injury, while defenders Amantino Mancini of Roma, and German based Dede and Bordon have received surprise call-ups.

Argentina boss Marcelo Bielsa has rewarded Santiago Solari for his form with Real Madrid (he scored in the recent derby victory at Atletico), and teammate Esteban Cambiasso.

The two squads are based on players plying their trade in Europe.

BRAZIL:

Dida (Milan), Marcos (Palmeiras); Cafu (Milan), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid), Mancini (Roma), Dede (Borussia Dortmund), Roque Junior (Siena), Edmilson (Lyon), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen), Bordon (Stuttgart); Juninho Pernambucano (Lyon), Felipe (Flamengo), Renato (Santos), Alex (Cruzeiro), Kaka (Milan), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich), Julio Batista (Sevilla), Edu (Arsenal); Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Luis Fabiano (Sao Paulo), Adriano (Inter).

ARGENTINA:

Pablo Cavallero (Celta Vigo), Leo Franco (Mallorca); Roberto Ayala (Valencia), Gabriel Milito (Zaragoza), Fabricio Coloccini (Villarreal), Walter Samuel (Roma), Diego Placente (Bayer Leverkusen) Facundo Quiroga (Sporting); Esteban Cambiasso (Real Madrid), Santiago Solari (Real Madrid), Matias Almeyda (Internazionale), Javier Zanetti (Internazionale), Cristian Gonzalez (Inter), Juan Roman Riquelme (Villarreal), Andres D'Alessandro (Wolfsburg); Javier Saviola (Barcelona), Hernan Crespo (Chelsea) Cesar Delgado (Cruz Azul).

ROUND 12

April 28, 2004.

Boca Juniors-Newells Old Boys
Velez Sarsfield-Independiente
Rosario Central-River Plate
Gimnasia LP-Quilmes
Talleres-Banfield
San Lorenzo-Arsenal
Colon-Olimpo
Lanus-At. Rafaela
Racing Club-Nueva Chicago
Chacarita Juniors-Estudiantes LP

LEADING GOALSCORERS

1. Rolando Zarate (Velez Sarsfield) 9

2. Fernando Cavenaghi (River Plate) 7
& Aldo Osorio (Talleres Cordoba) 7

ARGENTINE CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	F	Pts
Boca Juniors	10	8	2	0	22	7	26
River Plate	10	7	1	2	29	13	22
Velez Sarsfield	10	6	2	2	22	12	20
Talleres Cordoba	10	6	2	2	20	12	20
Racing Club	10	6	1	3	19	16	19
Colon Santa Fe	10	5	2	3	14	16	17
Independiente	10	3	4	3	12	12	13
Lanus	10	4	1	5	15	17	13
Newells Old Boys	10	2	6	2	15	13	12
Banfiel	10	3	3	4	11	11	12
San Lorenzo	10	2	5	3	11	11	11
Atletico Rafaela	10	3	2	5	13	15	11
Quilmes	10	2	5	3	11	13	11
Nueva Chicago	10	2	5	3	12	16	11
Gimnasia La Plata	10	2	4	4	16	16	10
Arsenal	10	1	6	3	9	15	9
Rosario Central	10	2	3	5	10	17	9
Estudiantes	10	2	3	5	11	19	9
Olimpo	10	2	3	5	9	17	9
Chacarita Juniors	10	0	4	6	10	23	4

EURO 2004 PHASE 1 FIXTURES

All Matches Phase 1

12 June 2004 - Group A			
Portugal	17:00	Greece	Dragão - Porto
Spain	19:45	Russia	Algarve - Faro-Loulé
13 June 2004 - Group B			
Switzerland	17:00	Croatia	Dr. Magalhães Pessoa - Leiria
France	19:45	England	Luz - Lisbon
14 June 2004 - Group C			
Denmark	17:00	Italy	D. Afonso Henriques - Guimarães
Sweden	19:45	Bulgaria	José Alvalade - Lisbon
15 June 2004 - Group D			
Germany	19:45	Netherlands	Dragão - Porto
Czech Republic	17:00	Latvia	Aveiro Municipal - Aveiro
16 June 2004 - Group A			
Greece	17:00	Spain	Bessa - Porto
Russia	19:45	Portugal	Luz - Lisbon
17 June 2004 - Group B			
England	17:00	Switzerland	Cidade de Coimbra - Coimbra
Croatia	19:45	France	Dr. Magalhães Pessoa - Leiria
18 June 2004 - Group C			
Bulgaria	17:00	Denmark	Braga Municipal - Braga
Italy	19:45	Sweden	Dragão - Porto
19 June 2004 - Group D			
Latvia	17:00	Germany	Bessa - Porto
Netherlands	19:45	Czech Republic	Aveiro Municipal - Aveiro
20 June 2004 - Group A			
Spain	19:45	Portugal	José Alvalade - Lisbon
Russia	19:45	Greece	Algarve - Faro-Loulé
21 June 2004 - Group B			
Croatia	19:45	England	Luz - Lisbon
Switzerland	19:45	France	Cidade de Coimbra - Coimbra
22 June 2004 - Group C			
Italy	19:45	Bulgaria	D. Afonso Henriques - Guimarães
Denmark	19:45	Sweden	Bessa - Porto
23 June 2004 - Group D			
Netherlands	19:45	Latvia	Braga Municipal - Braga
Germany	19:45	Czech Republic	José Alvalade – Lisbon

Meet this year's EURO 2004 Mascot – Kinas!

EUROPEAN RESULTS

Champions League

AS Monaco 3 def Chelsea 1 (Return Leg May 5th)
FC Porto 0 drew Deportivo 0 (Return Leg May 4th)

UEFA Cup Semi-Finals 1st Leg

Newcastle Utd (Eng) 0 Olympique Marseille (Fra) 0
Villarreal (Spa) 0 Valencia (Spa) 0
2nd Legs to be played May 6th

Spanish Primera Liga

Barcelona's Edgar Davids (right) fights for the ball against Real Madrid's Michel Salgado.

Brazilian whiz-midfielder Ronaldinho inspired Barcelona to an enthralling 2-1 victory over Real Madrid at the Bernabeu in last week's Spanish Primera Liga match of the week.

Santiago Solari looked to have set Madrid on their way to victory, breaking the deadlock early in the second half, but the combination of goals from Patrick Kluivert and Xavi's winner four minutes from time, and the dismissal of Portuguese international Luis Figo, brought them crashing back down to earth.

Madrid could have held a slender lead in the Primera Liga after Valencia's one-all draw to Bilbao but failed to capitalize on their loss to Barca.

Ronaldinho tormented the Real defence from start to finish with his silky samba skills and darting runs, Real defenders had no options but to bring down the Brazilian international on numerous occasions.

Valencia moved a point clear at the top of the Primera Liga after a 1-1 draw against Athletic Bilbao.

Jorge Lopez opened the scoring for Valencia from the penalty spot but the hosts were back on level terms by the half-hour mark.

Francisco Yeste swung a quality free-kick in from the left and Asier Del Horno rose highest to smash a thumping header past Santiago Canizares in the Valencia goal.

Champions League semi-finalists Deportivo Coruna remained fourth after they were held to a 1-1 draw at Malaga.

Depor looked in control after midfielder Victor put them ahead with a well-struck shot midway through the first half but they eased up too quickly and Malaga equalised before the break when substitute Manuel Canabal stabbed in from close range.

Relegation-threatened Espanyol got out of the drop zone with a priceless 3-1 win at home to Atletico Madrid thanks to a late double from substitute striker Claudiu Raducanu.

Albacete claimed a vital three points at Racing Santander with a tense 2-0 victory.

Antonio Pacheco opened the scoring three minutes before the break before Pablo Redondo secured the points in the 55th minute.

Real Betis goalkeeper Antonio Prats saved two penalties as his side ran out 2-1 winners over Real Sociedad.

Betis took the lead after 15 minutes through Benjamin, who showed good control to bring the ball down in the area before turning sharply to let fly from close range.

Things quickly went from bad to worse for Sociedad as they conceded a second goal just five minutes later to Daniel Dani.

Celta Vigo grounded out a narrow 1-0 victory over Osasuna thanks to an own goal from Inaki Munoz while David Villa got all four of Real Zaragoza's goals in their incredible 4-4 draw with Sevilla.

Espanyol 3 Atletico Madrid 1, Malaga 1 Deportivo Coruna 1, Athletic Bilbao 1 Valencia 1, Celta Vigo 1 Osasuna 0, Santander 0 Albacete 2, Real Betis 2 Real Sociedad 1, Real Madrid 1 Barcelona 2, Real Zaragoza 4 Sevilla 4, Villarreal 1 Murcia 0, Valladolid 1 Real Mallorca 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Valencia	**34**	**21**	**8**	**5**	**66**	**24**	**71**
2 Real Madrid	34	21	7	6	68	43	70
3 Barcelona	34	19	9	6	57	35	66
4 Deportivo	34	18	8	8	54	32	62
5 Athletic	34	14	10	10	47	41	52
6 Osasuna	34	11	15	8	36	31	48
7 Atlético	34	13	9	12	41	44	48
8 Villarreal	34	13	8	13	42	43	47
9 Málaga	34	14	5	15	45	49	47
10 Sevilla	34	12	10	12	49	42	46
11 Betis	34	11	13	10	42	38	46
12 Real Sociedad	34	10	10	14	40	47	40
13 Albacete	34	11	7	16	34	42	40
14 Zaragoza	34	10	9	15	40	50	39
15 Mallorca	34	11	6	17	43	60	39
16 Racing	34	10	9	15	44	58	38
17 Valladolid	34	9	10	15	40	51	37
18 Espanyol	34	11	4	19	41	56	37
19 Celta	34	8	12	14	44	60	36
20 Murcia	34	3	11	20	25	52	20

German Bundesliga

Bayern Leverkusen's Juan (left) fights for the ball with Borussia Dortmund's Tomas Rosicky.

Bayern Munich refuse to surrender their German title without a fight as they moved to within six points of tabletoppers Werder Bremen with a 1-0 win over city rivals 1860 Munich.

Bayern's winner came in the 50th minute when Brazilian Ze Roberto scurried down the left before cutting the ball back for Paraguayan ace Roque Santa Cruz to caress it into the net.

Werder extended their unbeaten run to 21 games with a 0-0 draw away to VfL Bochum but were left cursing the heroics of Dutch goalkeeper Rein van Duijnhoven who denied them victory.

Bremen have now drawn four out of their last five matches and Bayern will hope the leaders drop more points before the two lock horns at the Olympic Stadium on May 8.

Stuttgart continues its chase of a top two finish thanks to Silvio Meissner's solitary strike after 10 minutes in the 0-1 win at Hannover.

Bayer Leverkusen's 3-0 home victory over Borussia Dortmund pushed them to within striking distance of the top three, following their sixth win in seven matches.

Fourth-placed Leverkusen secured the convincing win thanks to goals from Marko Babic, Franca and Dimitar Berbatov.

Borussia Monchengladbach remain among a group of clubs who could slide into the bottom three following a 2-0 home defeat at the merciless hands of Wolfsburg, whose goals came from Fernando Baiano and Miroslav Karhan.

Schalke's hopes of qualifying for next season's UEFA Cup were dealt a blow as they succumbed 3-1 at Hansa Rostock.

Despite taking a 10th-minute lead through Gerald Asamoah, Hansa had levelled by half-time through Razundara Tjikuzu, and a second-half double by Martin Max proved decisive.

Cologne were pushed closer to the second division by a 4-2 loss at Hamburg.

Goals from Christian Rahn, Sergej Barbarez, David Jarolim and Milan Fukal made it a miserable away-day for Cologne, whose consolation goals came from Lukas Podolski and Christian Springer.

Cologne are now 11 points adrift of safety, with only 12 points to play for.

Second-bottom Eintracht Frankfurt improved their chances of avoiding the drop by winning 3-0 against mid-table Freiburg, with Ervik Skela, Christoph Preuss and Markus Beierle grabbing the all-important goals.

Frankfurt are two points away from Kaiserslautern who occupy the last safe position following a 3-0 loss at Hertha Berlin who climbed out of the bottom three.

All the goals came inside the first 23 minutes, with Marcelinho, Artur Wichniarek and Fredi Bobic on target.

Bayer Leverkusen 3 Dortmund 0, Moenchengladbach 0 Wolfsburg 2, Eintracht Frankfurt 3 Freiburg 0, Hamburg 4 Cologne 2, Hannover 0 Stuttgart 1, Hansa Rostock 3 Schalke 1, Hertha Berlin 3 Kaiserslautern 0, Bayern Munich 1 1860 Munich 0, Bochum 0 Werder Bremen 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Bremen	**30**	**20**	**8**	**2**	**67**	**28**	**68**
2 Bayern	30	18	8	4	64	32	62
3 Stuttgart	30	17	9	4	47	18	60
4 Leverkusen	30	16	7	7	62	36	55
5 Bochum	30	13	10	7	48	34	49
6 Dortmund	30	14	6	10	49	39	48
7 Schalke	30	11	10	9	41	38	43
8 Hamburg	30	12	6	12	43	52	42
9 Hansa	30	10	8	12	48	45	38
10 Wolfsburg	30	12	1	17	52	57	37
11 Freiburg	30	9	7	14	38	61	34
12 Hannover	30	8	9	13	44	56	33
13 Moenc/gladbach	30	8	8	14	32	43	32
14 Hertha	30	7	11	12	32	52	32
15 Kaiserslautern	30	10	4	16	32	53	31
16 1860 Munich	30	8	6	16	29	47	30
17 Eintracht	30	8	5	17	32	45	29
18 Köln	30	5	5	20	26	50	20

GREEK ETHNIKI KATIGORIA

Panathinaikos' Emmanuel Olisadebe celebrates scoring the winning goal against PAOK last week.

AEK Athens 1 Paniliakos 0, Kallithea 3 Xanthi 1, Egaleo 1 OFI Crete 0, Aris 3 Halkidona 0, Olympiakos 2 Panionios 0, Ionikos 2 Proodeftiki 1, Akratitos 1 Iraklis 0, PAOK 1 Panathinaikos 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Panathinaikos	**27**	**21**	**5**	**1**	**54**	**16**	**68**
2 Olympiacos	27	21	3	3	63	18	66
3 PAOK	27	17	5	5	44	24	56
4 AEK	27	14	6	7	50	28	48
5 Egaleo	27	14	6	7	34	22	48
6 Halkidona	27	12	6	9	36	35	42
7 Panionios	27	10	10	7	35	27	40
8 Iraklis	27	11	5	11	37	36	38
9 Xanthi	27	8	6	13	27	38	30
10 OFI	27	8	6	13	25	39	30
11 Ionikos	27	7	5	15	28	40	26
12 Kallithea	27	5	10	12	35	38	25
13 Aris	27	6	5	16	22	42	23
14 Akraitos	27	5	7	15	28	60	22
15 Paniliakos	27	4	7	16	26	53	19
16 Proodeftiki	27	3	8	16	21	49	17

WORLD

Scottish Premier League

Motherwell's Martyn Corrigan (left) goes in for a tackle on Dunfermline's Darren Young.

Teenage striker Aiden McGeady outshone Henrik Larsson with a debut goal in the 1-1 draw with Hearts at Tynecastle to show there might be life for the Hoops after the Swede's departure.

The 18-year-old served notice of his ability to manager Martin O'Neill, who is exploring the possibility of spending millions on a new marksman to replace Larsson this summer, and his goal would have brought another three points but for Mark de Vries' equaliser.

Partick Thistle face a nail-biting close to the season after a Steve Lovell strike for Dundee ensured the Jags will finish bottom of the Bank of Scotland Premier League.

The defeat at the hands of Jim Duffy's side means the Jags will definitely end the season in 12th place.

Thistle's only hope now of avoiding relegation is Inverness Caledonian Thistle - who will not be allowed entry into the top flight - pipping Bell's First Division leaders Clyde to the Bell's First Division title after closing the gap to just two points.

A last-gasp equaliser from Jason Scotland earned Dundee United a point in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Rangers.

It was his second goal after coming on at half-time with his side trailing 3-1.

Billy Dodds had fired United ahead in the first minute but Rangers replied with two goals from Steven Thompson, including a penalty, and substitute Hamed Namouchi.

Goals from Barry Nicholson, Gary Dempsey and Derek Young gave Dunfermline a well-deserved 3-0 win over Motherwell and kept the Pars in contention with Hearts for third spot.

The Fifers, who won through to their first Scottish Cup final for 36 years in midweek, dominated from start to finish and fully deserved the win.

Livingston strolled to a comfortable 2-0 victory over Aberdeen at Almondvale.

A well-struck goal by David McNamee after 24 minutes was enough to give the home side a 1-0 half-time lead and Colin McMenamin settled it after the break.

Kris Boyd scored twice for Kilmarnock to give them a 2-0 win over managerless Hibernian.

The 20-year-old seized on some schoolboy defending to enhance his hopes of forcing his way into Berti Vogts' Scotland squad.

Dundee Utd 3 Rangers 3, Dunfermline 3 Motherwell 0, Kilmarnock 2 Hibernian 0, Livingston 2 Aberdeen 0, Partick Thistle 0 Dundee 1, Hearts 1 Celtic 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Celtic	**34**	**29**	**4**	**1**	**100**	**21**	**91**
2Rangers	34	23	6	5	69	29	75
3Hearts	34	15	11	8	48	37	56
4Dunfermline	34	13	11	10	38	43	50
5Motherwell	34	12	9	13	39	40	45
6Dundee United	34	11	10	13	42	54	43
7Livingston	34	9	12	13	40	48	39
8Hibernian	34	9	11	14	37	54	38
9Dundee	34	9	10	15	42	55	37
10Kilmarnock	34	10	5	19	41	68	35

French Ligue 1

Nantes' Emerse Fae (left) fights for possession with Monaco's Jerome Rothen

Monaco's hopes of regaining top spot in Ligue 1 suffered a major blow as they fell to a 1-0 defeat at home to Nantes.

It took until the 78th minute for the visitors to break the deadlock when Gille Yapi-Yapo found Marama Vahirua, who broke an offside trap and fired home past goalkeeper Tony Sylva.

Top-of-the-table Lyon took full advantage of Monaco's slip-up to extend their lead to four points and move ever closer to completing a hat-trick of French league titles by beating Rennes 3-0.

Goals from Juninho Pernambucano, Mickael Essien and Peguy Luyindula in the second half delighted the Stade Gerland crowd who had learned just before kick-off of Monaco's surprise home surrender to Nantes.

Paris St Germain charged into second place after Pauleta's double helped them overcome Marseille 2-1 at the Parc des Princes.

Pauleta's goals, one in each half, were both magnificent strikes and secured a third win in a row for PSG against their arch rivals, following league and cup victories earlier in the season.

Laurent Battles got Marseille's goal, but it wasn't enough to save them from defeat.

Auxerre kept up their chase for a UEFA Cup place with a 2-1 victory over Coupe de la Ligue winners Sochaux.

All the goals came from Auxerre players, Phillippe Mexes' 54th-minute own goal cancelling out Bonaventure Kalou's 49th-minute opener.

Mexes' embarrassment was covered almost instantly as Djibril Cisse hit the winner less than 60 seconds later.

At the wrong end of the table Toulouse clambered out of the bottom three, leaving Ajaccio in their wake, thanks to a convincing 3-1 victory.

Achille Emana, Cedric Faure and Christophe Avezac scored for Toulouse whose task was made easier by Nicolas Bonnal's sending off on 51 minutes. Mamadou Bagayoko netted a late consolation for ten-man Ajaccio.

Guingamp were another relegation-threatened side to pick up an important win, beating Lens 1-0 thanks to Jerome Leroy's solitary goal.

Metz beat Nice 1-0 after Gregory Proment found the net and will be more confident of avoiding relegation as they are now three points clear of the drop zone.

Monaco 0 Nantes 1, Lyon 3 Stade Rennes 0, Toulouse 3 Ajaccio 1, Bastia 0 Bordeaux 2, Montpellier 0 Le Mans 3, Guingamp 1 Lens 0, Metz 1 Nice 0, Auxerre 2 Sochaux 1, Lille 0 Strasbourg 1, Paris St Germain 2 Marseille 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Lyon	**33**	**21**	**6**	**6**	**57**	**23**	**69**
2PSG	33	19	9	5	47	25	66
3Monaco	33	18	11	4	52	24	65
4Auxerre	33	17	6	10	52	29	57
5Sochaux	33	16	9	8	47	34	57
6Marseille	33	16	5	12	47	39	53
7Nantes	33	14	8	11	41	32	50
8Bordeaux	33	12	10	11	33	34	46
9Lens	33	13	7	13	27	41	46
10Nice	33	10	14	9	35	32	44
11Lille	33	12	8	13	36	34	44
12Rennes	33	11	9	13	44	42	42
13Bastia	33	9	11	13	33	41	38
14Strasbourg	33	9	9	15	41	49	36
15Guingamp	33	10	6	17	32	50	36
16Metz	33	9	8	16	28	36	35
17Toulouse	33	8	9	16	27	40	33
18Ajaccio	33	8	8	17	28	51	32
19Montpellier	33	8	5	20	36	62	29
20Mans	33	6	10	17	25	50	28

Dutch Eredivisie

PSV's Mark Van Bommel was on target in the 3-0 win over RBC Roosendaal.

Ajax's march to the Eredivisie title was held up slightly after a goalless draw at NEC Nijmegen.

Ronald Koeman's side are still heavily favoured to go on and win the Eredivisie, they lead nearest rivals PSV Eindhoven by six points with just three games remaining

PSV denied Ajax the chance to scoop the Eredivisie title this weekend after a comfortable 3-0 win away to RBC Roosendaal.

Mark van Bommel opened the scoring when he slotted home after stealing the ball from Ronildo Pereira Tininho on the halfway line.

Mateja Kezman made it two before Dennis Rommedahl finished things off with a fine individual effort.

AZ Alkmaar secured a place in next season's UEFA Cup with a sensational 7-0 dismantling of visiting RKC Waalwijk.

Michael Meerdink was the star of the show with a hat-trick and two assists as woeful RKC were sent back home in despondent mood after conceding all seven goals in the first 65 minutes.

Individual goals from Kenneth Perez and Danny Landzaat plus a double from Robin Nelisse completed the rout which sparked a jubilant pitch invasion by the home fans.

Struggling Vitesse Arnhem's hopes of beating the drop were boosted in a goalless draw against Heerenveen while Twente Enschede picked up maximum points with a 2-0 victory over visiting Willem II. Georgi Gakhokidze and then Blaise N'Kufo netted for the home team.

Roda JC left it late before securing a point at home to Amstel Cup finalists FC Utrecht following a 1-1 draw. Cristiano Santos was the hero for the home side, popping up at the death to cancel out Stefaan Tanghe's opener.

Volendam stay rooted to the bottom of the table after they crashed 2-0 at Feyenoord.

An Ebi Smolarek goal on the stroke of half-time and a penalty from Dirk Kuijt were enough to give the hosts the three points.

Zwolle are another team haunted by the prospect of the drop and remain in the relegation play-off zone after they came from behind to earn a 2-2 draw at Groningen.

Sander van Gessel and Paul Matthijs gave the home side a 2-0 first-half lead but a late fight-back by Zwolle was rewarded with goals from Albert van der Haar and Mauro Almeida.

Csaba Feher marked his return to the NAC Breda starting line-up with the only goal of the game as they saw off ADO Den Haag.

Roda JC 1 Utrecht 1, Heerenveen 0 Vitesse 0, RBC Roosendaal 0 PSV Eindhoven 3, AZ Alkmaar 7 RKC Waalwijk 0, Twente 2 Willem 0, NEC Nijmegen 0 Ajax 0, Groningen 2 Zwolle 2, Feyenoord 2 Volendam 0, NAC Breda 1 Den Haag 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Ajax	**31**	**22**	**5**	**4**	**67**	**29**	**71**
2PSV	31	20	5	6	80	26	65
3Feyenoord	31	18	8	5	59	34	62
4Alkmaar	31	17	5	9	61	35	56
5Heerenveen	31	16	7	8	44	32	55
6Roda	31	12	10	9	54	38	46
7Willem II	31	12	9	10	42	49	45
8Twente	31	14	2	15	50	48	44
9Utrecht	31	12	7	12	40	48	43
10NAC	31	11	9	11	51	48	42
11Roosendaal	31	10	10	11	32	38	40
12Waalwijk	31	9	9	13	40	47	36
13Groningen	31	8	9	14	34	48	33
14NEC	31	10	2	19	40	55	32
15Den Haag	31	7	7	17	29	57	28
16Zwolle	31	5	10	16	26	55	25
17Vitesse	31	3	15	13	34	52	24
18Volendam	31	6	5	20	28	72	23

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE

ZLATKO HEROICS HALT STAR

Bankstown City Lions	HYUNDAI	2
Sydney Crescent Star		0

By Paul Goodwin

A stunning penalty save from Zlatko Josevski and some hard work by the forward combination of Borg and Babic helped Bankstown to outright third position in the League with only two rounds to go.

Bankstown and Crescent Star slugged it out at Jensen Park in a tense match that was still there for the taking up until the last few minutes, though most observers would have conceded that the Lions appeared to be sufficiently sound in defence to keep the visitors at bay, despite a spirited last surge.

The game turned on a 53rd minute penalty awarded to Crescent Star with Bankstown leading 1-0.

Zlatko Josevski earned a caution from referee Peter Vrtkovski as a result of a trip on Tolgay Ozbey who burst into the box and came clattering down in a tangle of legs as Lions' defenders and the keeper tried to block the young striker's progress.

It was one of the few times that Ozbey had really troubled the home defence, but after a squabble involving several players from both sides that saw Filip Marzec of Star and Marc Hoenselaars from the Lions getting cautions as well,

Zlatko Josevski is embraced by a teammate after his impressive 53rd minute save

Vrtkovski pointed to the spot and the duty fell to regular penalty-taker Angelo Petratos.

Josevski, who has been in sensational form of late, guessed right and saved the spot kick thus keeping his side in the lead.

It was a great opening to the game and Bankstown, resplendent in new gold shirts, came out firing with Sean Babic back from suspension to partner Matt Borg up front with Hoenselaars supporting them. Anthony Doumanis was useful too with veteran Saso Boskovski lending a creative hand from deep.

Six minutes in Bankstown had their first real chance when Milan Bosnar's long ball found Borg who then hit a low shot that deflected just wide of the left post.

The combined efforts of Josevski and defender Bosnar repelled a driving move from Crescent Star in the 11th minute that was initiated by Joe Bruni and saw the ball being forced into the side netting by Ozbey from the resulting corner.

The pressure from Bankstown was intense, before they eventually made Crescent pay with a goal to Babic.

Borg did the work out on the right and threaded the ball through nicely for the one time Marconi and Sydney United striker to beat the keeper who had already been caught in two minds, knowing both strikers were in full flight.

The second-half began with Crescent Star keen to draw level. Ozbey got away and sprang the offside trap in the 49th minute but could only chip the keeper to send his effort just over the bar.

Four minutes later the speedy youngster again dodged his markers to confront the defence who reacted too impulsively and collectively brought him crashing down.

The spot kick was inevitably awarded but the result of it was the impressive save by the League's in-form keeper, Josevski.

That meant that the Lions could protect their lead and with Doumanis already making way for George Nohra, another with a niggling injury to consider, the offensive continued in earnest.

Only moments after the penalty miss and with the visitors' still stunned, Bankstown burst up field.

This time it was Babic who found Borg, and the competition's top scorer did the rest by coolly slotting the ball low past Vanja Ivesa who was not an especially busy man; though he did have to pick the ball out of the back of the net twice on an unfortunate afternoon for Crescent.

Mathew Borg (above and right) not only kept a firm grip on the Golden Boot over the weekend with a 55-minute goal, he ensured third place for Bankstown

Running riot: Evangelos Petratos and Crescent Star had their moments, but failed to maintain against an on-fire Lions side

Towards the end Bankstown had to shore up their defence and it needed all the experience of Paul Wearne, skipper Richard Luksic and veteran Saso Boskovski to steer them home amid a barrage of late Crescent Star attacks.

The Star skipper, Yavuz Ekinci, was the chief architect with substitute Terry Atsas joining him in sparking his side for a late and very dangerous flurry.

Josevski and the defensive team needed to be on their toes in a torrid twenty minutes at the end of a game that was tense until the last tick of the clock.

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS 2
(Z Babic 29', M Borg 55')

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR 0
at Jensen Park, Sefton

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS: Zlatko Josevski, Paul Wearne, Richard Luksic (C), Milan Bosnar (Steve Llavas 63), Sasha Trajcevski, Saso Boskovski, Anthony Doumanis (George Nohra 43), Robbie Gomez, Marc Hoenselaars (Alex Trpkoski 58), Sean Babic, Matt Borg
Subs not used: RGK Ivan Kovacevic, Phil Hartshorn
Coach: Andy Papoulias

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR: Vanja Ivesa, Evangelos Petratos, Askin Oygur (Terry Atsas 57), Michael Cindric, Ugur Tokdogan, Joe Bruni, Yavus Ekinci (C), Shane Hammond, Filip Marzec, Daniel Willoughby, Tolgay Ozbey
Subs not used: RGK Wojtek Zarzycki, Gokce Oncu, Adam Klr, Juan Arango
Coach: Yasin Ozdenak

Referee: Peter Vrtkovski
Assistant Referees: Lindsay Edmunds and Ken Sharp
Fourth Official: Wayne Crabb
Yellow Cards: Bankstown: Zlatko Josevski 53, Marc Hoenselaars 53, Milan Bosnar 57 Crescent Star: Filip Marzec 53, Michael Cindric 88

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Berries not buried yet

By Greg Stock

The Panthers charge for a top-five spot unravelled in the most bizarre of circumstances on Saturday night, beaten 2-1 by Canterbury-Marrickville at Cook Park.

In front of their vocal home fans the Panthers defensive inadequacies and lack of a quality target man came home to haunt them as the Berries picked up their first win in ten weeks.

Without the services of the injured Tim O'Connell, as well as the suspended Adam Anderson and Jason Connolly, the Panthers forward line was a mere shadow of its former self and it showed.

Despite largely dominating the match with the lion's share of possession and territory, a lack of finishing bought about their downfall taking them to the brink of elimination from a tightly contested top-five race.

Paul Marosevic was the unlucky defender who was penalized by referee Jonathan Streater for a handball inside the penalty box in the 21st minute. An attempted shot by Berries midfielder Paul Bourke skimmed off the turf, taking a deviation and hitting Marosevic innocuously on the hand.

Referee Streater immediately pointed to the spot, allowing Steve Karavatakis to step up for the spot kick and score his tenth goal of the season.

Sensing a lack of punch on the forward line coach Tony Rasmussen swung the changes at half-time moving from a 4-4-2 to a 3-4-3 as he tried desperately to chase the game.

His side responded with left-sided midfielder Allan Wawi, a constant menace up and down the left-hand touchline.

Laying on a number of golden chances his forwards were unable to deliver a counterpunch, leaving the game for the Berries taking long after it should have been well wrapped up.

Pushing forward, the Panthers allowed themselves to be caught out with a lack of numbers in the 75th minute. Former Penrith midfielder Alan Picken broke through in the 75th minute, turning Daniel Wells and slipping a shot beneath a diving Chad Taylor.

The Panthers then set up a grandstand finish two minutes later when Wawi whipped in a cross for Roger Galayini who slammed his shot past a stranded Bob Catlin.

Mounting serious pressure for the final thirteen minutes coach Tony Rasmussen was left fuming as his side showed any number of ways to bomb excellent opportunities. Substitute Danny Hinton narrowly missed in the 84th minute before Galayini had his pile-driver stopped by Catlin with two minutes left on the clock.

The win breathed new life into the Berries chances of remaining in the Premier League as they moved briefly to eleventh spot.

"It probably wasn't one of our best games but at this stage of the season we will take points whichever way they come," Berries striker Steve Karavatakis said.

"Our performances in recent weeks haven't been all that bad and tonight luck didn't go with us but we managed to stay in the game and that's what matters."

With the Central Coast winning their game on Sunday, the Berries are again left with everything to do in next two weeks.

Penrith Panthers	ALLIED PICKFORDS	1
Canterbury-Marrickville	OLYMPIC	2

PENRITH PANTHERS 1
(R Galayini 77)
CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE ...2
(S Karavatakis 21' pen A Picken 75')
at Cook Park, St Marys.

PENRITH PANTHERS: Chad Taylor, Ryan Noble, Daniel Wells, Allan Wawi, Peter Bennett, Luke O'Connell, Roger Galayini, Daniel McCann, Paul Marosevic (Jason Scibernas 65'), Luke Boyd, Martin McCaffery (Danny Hinton 82').
Coach: Tony Rasmussen

CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE: Bob Catlin, Sasa Uljesenovic, Ben Price, Cormack Begley, George Souris, Paul Bourke, Alan Picken, Steve Karavatakis, Stuart Banks, Achileas Markopoulos, John Kyriazopoulos (Aheleas Kotsopoulos 63').
Coach: Bob Catlin

Cautions: Bennett (pp) 23' Kyriazopoulos (cmo) 34' Galayini (pp) 36' Wawi (pp) 36' Picken (cmo) 53' Noble (pp) 60' Souris (cmo) 85'
Referee: Jonathan Streater
Assistant Referees: Jason Blackwood and Ross Williams
Fourth Official: Jim Barnes

Suns shake under Coastal surge

By Greg Stock

Rockdale's slim chances for the post-season evaporated in the brilliant autumn sunshine at Seymour Shaw Park on Sunday afternoon, with the Coast recording one of the biggest victories in their short Premier League history to defeat the Suns 3-1.

"The enormity of this win speaks volumes for the worth of this team," Coasties coach Jim Foley said.

Away from home against a high-profile team with aspirations for the top five and with their backs to the wall following Canterbury's unlikely 2-1 win over Penrith the night before, the Coasties could well have been excused for going through the motions and being soundly thrashed.

With it all in front of them, this young team that has been one of the Leagues' unfancied combatants rose to the occasion, scoring first and then fighting their way back from 1-1 with a couple of well taken goals.

The key to the victory did not lie with their handful of experienced personnel, but rather with a number of youngsters who showed just what they are capable of under the most adverse of circumstances.

Left-sided midfielder Daniel Surridge, defender Matthew Mitchell and playmaker John Bennis dominated proceedings and layed the foundations for the win.

In-form striker Peter Haynes got the side off to a positive start when he swooped on a misdirected pass from Joe Moric. Able to get on the outside of Richard Plesa with his pace he fired off a shot which beat an outstretched Trinity Allen to nestle neatly in the bottom-left corner.

The Suns responded in the 31st minute when Harry James laid on a defence splitting pass for Alilovic who successfully went one on one with an advancing Matthew Trott.

The goal seemingly lifted the lethargic Suns and their best attacking moments came inside the next ten minutes.

The Coasties lived dangerously as they repelled three key chances, all from Alilovic, before scoring their second in the last few moments on the half. Trott's clearance found Surridge on the left hand side, who beat Plesa to the by-line and whip in a cross which found Haynes lurking on the edge of the six-yard box and he made no mistake as he drifted in unmarked.

While Rockdale were seemingly going through the motions, they did have opportunities to find an equaliser but were let down by some poor finishing in their front third.

When Denis Alilovic was moved back into the midfield to accommodate the introduction of Goce Trposki and Daniel Kukucka the Suns chances slowed to a halt, the Coasties scoring number three to wrap up the match eleven minutes from time.

Daniel Surridge found the net from the edge of the six-yard box after substitute Ben Murrell had weaved his way through some diabolical Suns tackles.

"We had a lot of pressure on us today and to see the boys respond the way they did was very pleasing," Central Coast boss Jim Foley said, "I give the guys a lot of credit for the character they showed today.

"We have been playing these must-win cup type games every week for a while now and it was great to see them put it all together and win under such circumstances."

While taking nothing away from the Coasties win, Rockdale were a shadow of their former selves and lacked the enthusiasm required to win.

Still in with a mathematical chance of the top five, they played like their season was over, disappointing their army of fans who turned their frustrations on coach Ivan Petkovic throughout the second-half.

Their anger would have been far better vented on a lethargic midfield. Harry James and Alilovic were the only positive exceptions in a team that that surrended too easily.

Rockdale City Suns	AMBASSADOR	1
Central Coast United	Colorbond	2

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS 1
(D Alilovic 31')
CENTRAL COAST UNITED 2
(P Haynes 15', 45', D Surridge 79')
at Seymour Shaw Park, Miranda

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS: Trinity Allen, Tony Ju, Joe Moric, Ante Juric, Richard Plesa, Ivan Bosnar, Peter Apolevski (Daniel Kukucka 54'), Tony Sekulic (Goce Trposki 54'), Harry James (Kosta Mrcic 72'), Ante Moric, Denis Alilovic.
Coach: Ivan Petkovic

CENTRAL COAST UNITED: Matthew Trott, Mitchell Daley, David Bagwell, Sean Matthews, Beau Busch, John Bennis, Mark Falzon, Peter Haynes, Matthew Mitchell, Nathan Byrn (Ben Murrell 77'), Daniel Surridge.
Coach: Jim Foley

Cautions: Nil
Referee: Srebre Delovski
Assistant Referees: Greg Leadbeater and Sam D'Imperio
Fourth Official: Nil

Due to production deadlines the
Parramatta Eagles
vs
St George Saints
Match report will be featured in next week's issue

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Demons' demolition gives B'rigg hell

By Paul Goodwin

Blacktown walked right over a lack-lustre White Eagles side on Saturday, kicking three goals in the first fifteen minutes to condemn the Bonnyrigg team to a 'what could have been' winter.

Blacktown City Demons strolled to an effortless 5-0 win over fierce rivals Bonnyrigg White Eagles at The Gabbie on Saturday night.

After going to a second minute lead the Demons struck twice more in the next quarter of an hour to sink any last remaining chance the visitors held of making it into the semi finals this season.

The early goal was a great start for the home side, but with everything to gain by throwing caution to the wind Bonnyrigg threw themselves into attack again right after the early set back, but chances they created came to naught.

Sadly for the White Eagles their front men Jimmy Aschner and Aaron Burgess, as well as midfielder Sam Larocca, all squandered chances before the Demons could further press home their advantage.

With little more than half-an-hour gone Blacktown fashioned a fourth goal and after that the game deteriorated considerably, as the chance of Bonnyrigg staging an unlikely comeback evaporated completely.

The Demons did manage a fifth goal ten-minutes into the second-half and also turned down the heat by taking off two of their wounded warriors who had suffered from injuries in recent weeks that had kept them out of crucial matches.

Ben Willard, after the fifth goal had gone in, and Tony Faria before half-time, made way for Simon Catanzaro and Stephen Kayes with the home side playing well within themselves for the remainder of the match.

It had been anticipated that the match would be a tight one with so much at stake for both sides, but a full-strength Blacktown were completely untroubled against a Bonnyrigg missing skipper Tayfun Devrimol and having key midfielder Brad Groves under an injury cloud and only able to last half the game.

The opening goal came when White Eagles' keeper Cem Akilli could only parry a powerful shot from the left, following an incisive run down the flank from Tony Faria.

Luke Roodenburg was quick to react and steered the ball over the line to give the Demons the very early initiative. Bonnyrigg were hit hard and never recovered.

Mark Milligan almost set up Roodenburg for a second goal a minute later when he sent over a very firm cross from the right that eluded the blond haired marksman as he arrived in the goalmouth a split second too late to convert.

A corner from the right came to the far post and was spilled by Akilli and after a frantic scramble in the goalmouth eventually Paul Karbon was able to get the ball over the Bonnyrigg line.

A minute later it was 3-0 and the White Eagles were completely stymied.

Damien Foxe got away down the left and then the ball was crossed to the far post for an easy header by Adam Kwasnik to send the home fans wild.

There were still chances for Bonnyrigg but Aschner was well over with his shot from close range in the 34th and a great cross from the left by Brad Groves eluded the strikers once more in the moments just before that.

Blacktown scored again in the 37th.

Milligan got away down the right and sent a ball in to the far post where Faria laid it back in the path of Kwasnik who steered the ball in, low from 12 yards.

A lovely chip from Milligan in the 55th made it 5-0 for the Demons after the former Northern Spirit man had danced his way through the heart of the Bonnyrigg defence.

Blacktown City Demons	Perfection	5
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	mr.mobile	0

Tearing up the turf: Luke Roodenburg takes to the Gabbie pitch

Eagles keeper Cem Akili could only watch on in disbelief as Blacktown completed a 5-0 thrashing

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS 5
(L Roodenburg 2', P Karbon 15', A Kwasnik 16', 36', M Milligan 55')
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 0
at Gabbie Stadium, Seven Hills

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS: John Crawley (C), Damien Foxe, Paul Karbon, Patrick Gatt, Ben Willard (Stephen Kayes 57), Kane Rastall, Josh Maguire (Brian Vanoga 80), Mark Milligan, Tony Faria (Simon Catanzaro 43), Luke Roodenburg, Adam Kwasnik
Sub not used: RGK Brody Crane, and Dominic Magill
Coach: Brian Brown

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES: Cem Akilli, Devrim Huseyin, Mark D'Alessandro, Shane Knight (C), Fernando Pellegrino, Greg Collins (Milorad Simonovic 64), Sam Larocca, Brad Groves (George Radmanovic 46), Vuko Tomasevic, Aaron Burgess, Jimmy Aschner (Alex Canak 64)
Subs not used: RGK Ali Akbal and Mark Sartoretto
Coach: Gordon Brown

Referee: Simon Micallef
Assistant Referees: Jose da Silva and Adam Susz
Fourth Official: Marc Nemorin
Yellow Cards: Blacktown: Nil; Bonnyrigg: George Radmanovic 57

Alilovic double denies Devils

Belconnen Blue Devils	Banc Trade	2
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Continental	2

By Paul Goodwin

A.P.I.A.'s year might be over in regards to the post-season, but they still came out fighting against second-placed Belconnen at McKellar on Saturday night.

Tony Alilovic secured a two-goal swag as the Tigers fired a warning shot across the bow of those who suggested they were a spent force for 2004.

The game started brightly for the Blue Devils when, in the fourth minute, Mike Katz put a cross in from the right which was met by David Arranz, at the back post, who steered his header past Stewart Vella in the A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt goal.

Belconnen's lead did not last long though as five minutes later, after Belconnen failed to clear the ball, Tony Alilovic found himself in space in the box and was able to bury his shot in the top of the net, giving Jimmy Carr, deputising for an injured Tony Giannasca, little chance of effecting a save.

In the 22nd minute a long ball from Robbie Hooker nearly put Alilovic in again, but Jimmy Carr came charging out of his box and was happy to see his blocked clearance go wide after it had flown over his head.

In the 43rd minute Alilovic met a corner, his header being parried by Carr, only to go back again to Alilovic who headed tamely back to Carr and missed his chance to get his side 2-1 up.

Loose defending a minute later saw Alilovic again find a bit of space in the Belconnen box, this time he was able to turn and shoot low past Carr into the bottom left corner of the net.

James Monie, instrumental in setting up the two A.P.I.A. goals, was first to come close to scoring in the second-half, when he shot over the bar following a corner.

A Blue Devils' opportunity came from a long throw from Adrian Dowling, which was flicked on at the near post by Castro, but Danny Macor was unable to reach the ball at the far post in time to capitalise.

The Blue Devils equalised finally in the 67th minute, when an Ilija Prenzoski shot-cum-cross was met at the near post and steered into the net by Katz.

Three minutes later Katz was in the action again trying to curl a ball round the defenders following a sequence of passes by his Belconnen team-mates, but his effort went just wide.

The locals continued to attack and Oscar Zamora curled a free kick into the six-yard box, in the 88th minute, Macor tried to get a flick on the ball but missed, which very nearly fooled Vella, who just managed to hang on to the ball.

A minute later Arranz was disappointed not to get a free-kick when he was brought down, when charging down the left wing.

Unfortunately referee Ben Wilson didn't like a comment made by Arranz and gave him a second yellow card to send him in for an early shower.

In time added on James Stubbs-Mills had a chance to win the game for A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt, but put his shot wide from the edge of the box.

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS 2
(D Arranz 4', M Katz 67')
A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS 2
(T Alilovic 9', 44')
at McKellar Soccer Centre, McKellar

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS Jimmy Carr, Adrian Dowling, Patrick Lloyd, Oscar Zamora, Nic Purdue, Michael Katz, David Arranz, Toplica Popovich , Alex Castro, Ilija Prenzoski, Daniel Macor (Anthony Gallozzi)
Subs not used: Matt Valeri, Adam Williams, David Brouwer, Doug Hynson
Coach: Chris Tanzey

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS: Stewart Vella, Paul Dee, David Barrett, Robbie Stanton, Michael Galluzzo (John -Paul Boutros), Damon Langan (C) Antony Tesoro (Nathan Moulds), Robbie Hooker, James Stubbs-Mills, Tony Alilovic, James Monie
Sub not used: Melikesh Mengi
Coach: Les De Cells

Referee: Ben Williams
Assistant Referees: Ned Sparkes and David Rowell
Fourth Official: Bill Simeonovic
Red Cards: Belconnen: David Arranz
Yellow Cards: Belconnen: Oscar Zamora, David Arranz (2); A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt: James Stubbs-Mills

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FIRST GRADE RESULTS & TABLES

Belconnen Blue Devils 2
(D Arranz 4', M Katz 67')
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers 2
(T Alliovic 9', 44')

Blacktown City Demons 5
(L Roodenburg 2', P Karbon 15', A Kwasnik 16', 36', M Milligan 55')
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0

Penrith Panthers 1
(R Galayini 81')
Canterbury-Marrickville 2
(S Karavatakis pen 21', A Picken 78')

Rockdale City Suns 1
(D Alilovic 32')
Central Coast United 3
(P Haynes 16', 45', D Surridge 80')

Bankstown City Lions 2
(Z Babic 29', M Borg 55')
Sydney Crescent Star 0

Parramatta Eagles .....TBA
St George Saints .....TBA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
St George Saints	19	14	2	3	42	21	21	44
Belconnen Blue Devils	20	12	5	3	43	25	18	41
Bankstown City Lions	20	11	2	7	39	31	8	35
Blacktown City Demons	20	10	3	7	41	24	17	33
Sydney Crescent Star	20	9	5	6	26	18	8	32
Penrith Panthers	20	9	2	9	25	36	-11	29
Rockdale City Suns	20	6	6	8	29	35	-6	24
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	20	7	2	11	32	35	-3	23
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	20	6	3	11	21	33	-12	21
Parramatta Eagles	19	5	5	9	27	30	-3	20
Central Coast United	20	5	3	12	25	45	-20	18
Canterbury Marrickville	20	4	4	12	25	42	-17	16

GRADE 20 RESULTS & TABLES

Belconnen Blue Devils 0
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers 1
(G De Lange 63')

Blacktown City Demons 3
(B Vanega 17', B Stephan 75', D Arcella 85' og)
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 4
(D Malenica 44', 56', A Dizdaric 70', D Drca 90')

Penrith Panthers 2
(T Johnson 6', J Long 89')
Canterbury-Marrickville 3
(J Tsironis 20', A Amegashie 42', J Tsironis 43')

Rockdale City Suns 0
Central Coast United 0

Bankstown City Lions 2
(B Sumbul 25', Unknown 45')
Sydney Crescent Star 0

Parramatta Eagles .....TBA
St George Saints .....TBA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	20	14	3	3	44	16	28	45
Parramatta Eagles	19	13	3	3	38	9	29	42
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	20	12	5	3	45	27	18	41
Penrith Panthers	20	9	4	7	35	26	9	31
Blacktown City Demons	20	8	4	8	33	28	5	28
Belconnen Blue Devils	20	7	5	8	25	25	0	26
Bankstown City Lions	20	6	5	9	21	42	-21	23
Canterbury Marrickville	20	6	4	10	33	45	-12	22
Central Coast United	20	4	8	8	25	31	-6	20
Rockdale City Suns	20	4	6	10	23	49	-26	18
St George Saints	19	4	5	10	24	33	-9	17
Sydney Crescent Star	20	4	4	12	20	35	-15	16

NEXT ROUND 21

FIRST GRADE

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Rockdale City Suns	v	A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat. 1st May	7.30pm	Seymour Shaw
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v	Bankstown City Lions	Sat. 1st May	7.00pm	Serbian Centre
St George Saints	v	Blacktown City Demons	Sat. 1st May	7.00pm	St George Stadium
Central Coast United	v	Penrith Panthers	Sat. 1st May	7.00pm	Pluim Park
Sydney Crescent Star	v	Belconnen Blue Devils	Sun. 2nd May	3.00pm	Lidcombe Oval
Canterbury-Marrickville	v	Parramatta Eagles	Sun. 2nd May	3.00pm	Henson Park

GRADE 20

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Rockdale City Suns	v	A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat. 1st May	5.30pm	Seymour Shaw
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v	Bankstown City Lions	Sat. 1st May	5.00pm	Serbian Centre
St George Saints	v	Blacktown City Demons	Sat. 1st May	5.00pm	St George Stadium
Central Coast United	v	Penrith Panthers	Sat. 1st May	5.00pm	Pluim Park
Sydney Crescent Star	v	Belconnen Blue Devils	Sun. 2nd May	1.00pm	Lidcombe Oval
Canterbury-Marrickville	v	Parramatta Eagles	Sun. 2nd May	1.00pm	Henson Park

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Sunday 25th April 2004

18	Matthew Borg (BCL)
17	Ilija Prenzoski (BBD)
12	Bruno Beddoni (SG), Daniel Macor (BBD)
10	Steve Karavatakis (CMO/RCS)
9	Jason Connolly (PP), Aaron Burgess (BWE), Denis Alilovic (RCS)
8	Daniel Watkins (SG), Peter Haynes (CCU)
7	Nathan Byrn (CCU), Luke Roodenburg (BCD), Roger Galayini (PP), Sean Babic (BCL)
6	Anthony Galliozzi (BBD), Dominic McGill (BCD), Filip Marzec (SCS)
5	Norman Tome (AL), Tony Ju (RCS), Sam Larocca (CMO/BWE), Ben Deighan (RCS), Tolgay Ozbey (SCS), Ante Deur (SG), Jimmy Aschner (BWE), David Arranz (BBD)
4	Paul Urlovic (BCD), Ben Delicata (PE), Tony Faria (BCD), George Nohra (BCL), Raphael Bove (SG), Zlatko Arambasic (ALT), Mark Milligan (BCD), Tony Alilovic (ALT)

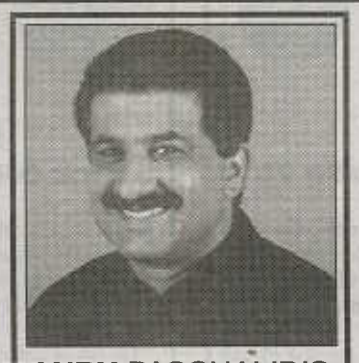
NSW PREMIER LEAGUE TIPPING COLUMN

PAUL GOODWIN
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST
ROCKDALE
BONNYRIGG
DRAW
DRAW
DRAW
CANTERBURY

Points = 42

TARYN ROCKALL
NSW SAPPHIRES CAPTAIN
BELCONNEN
BLACKTOWN
PENRITH
ROCKDALE
DRAW
ST GEORGE

Points = 46



ANDY PASCHALIDIS
ELITE SPORTS TRAVEL
DRAW
BONNYRIGG
ST GEORGE
PENRITH
DRAW
PARRAMATTA

Points = 47

GREG STOCK
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST
A.P.I.A.
BANKSTOWN
ST GEORGE
PENRITH
CRESCENT STAR
DRAW

Points = 49

'PEANUTS'
THE MONKEY
ROCKDALE
BANKSTOWN
ST GEORGE
PENRITH
CRESCENT STAR
CANTERBURY

Points = 45

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ROUND 21 PREVIEW

WITH PAUL GOODWIN & GREG STOCK

Rockdale City Suns vs A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers

Saturday 1st May at Seymour Shaw
Kick-off 7.30pm First Grade / 5.30pm Grade 20

It is a shame that both of these teams are playing for little more than pride this week, given they were both considered by many to be the early favourites for the title.

What a difference a season can make, the Suns enduring a season of turmoil with a couple of coaching changes, while A.P.I.A.'s year was over before it even started.

Having watched the Suns lack-lustre performance against the Coasties last week, it's hard to see them bouncing back from a game in which they played with little enthusiasm or passion.

Only Harry James, Trinity Allen and Denis Alilovic could hold their head up and it will be interesting to see if Ivan Petkovic can fire them up for a better performance.

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt achieved what only two other sides had done this year, and take a point away from Belconnen at McKellar.

Two goals from Tony Alilovic proving enough to post a draw, but what would have pleased coach Les De Celis is the return to form of a number of key personnel ahead of an important semi-final cup tie this Wednesday night.

James Monie, Paul Dee and Alilovic are back to their best but much will depend how they come through their midweek assignment ahead of this match.

In round one at Lambert Park Rockdale snared the three points with a 1-0 result courtesy of a Goce Trposki goal. In ten previous league meetings between the two clubs the record stands even with four wins each and two drawn.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles vs Bankstown City Lions

Saturday 1st May at Serbian Centre
Kick-Off 7.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

After their gutsy win over Crescent Star on Sunday last there is no reason to suppose that Bankstown City Lions cannot go on with the job and finish the season with a flourish.

The use of Anthony Doumanis and George Nohra for around half a game each to protect them from injuries they had carried into the game proved a sound strategy by Lions' coach Andy Papoulias, considering Sean Babic suffered a leg injury and will be in some doubt for the game at The Serbian Centre

To say that Bonnyrigg were a disappointment at The Gabbie against Blacktown would be an understatement and with the midweek Cup game at Lambert Park as a distraction it may be that the visitors will have a slight edge in stamina and freshness for this near derby game.

Borg and Babic, along with one time White Eagle Marc Hoenselaars, could cause mayhem in the home defence as Borg seeks to consolidate his spot at the head of the scorers for the season.

The lack of real punch from Jim Aschner and Aaaron Burgess for Bonnyrigg was a noticeable failing against the Demons last Saturday night and much will depend on whether the pair gained any new confidence from the midweek match against A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt.

It does look as though a decent crowd will turn up to the Serbian Centre and we would expect them to see plenty of fine entertainment.

The unpredictability of matches in this league all season has made most games impossible to predict and this one is bound to be no exception.

One more win could help the Lions to a third place finish; their best in quite a long time.

Central Coast United vs Penrith Panthers

Saturday 1st May at Pluim Park
Kick-Off 7.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

The Coasties did what they had to do by beating Rockdale convincingly at Seymour Shaw Park last Sunday afternoon.

Their away form defies belief at this stage of the season and here comes to another game that is absolutely crucial for both clubs who have everything to play for here.

Here we have a team that just cannot perform at Pluim Park - or the Mingara Centre before that - yet has won big games at places like The Gabbie, Lambert Park and now Seymour Shaw Park.

They are still not safe from collecting the wooden spoon, so here they will be looking for a win at last in front of their own supporters as the season draws to a close.

Penrith, by contrast, were dealt a body blow by the Coast's closest and fiercest rival Canterbury last Saturday night and find themselves three points outside the five following Blacktown's win last Saturday and Crescent Star's loss the next day.

A Panthers' win is the order of the day from Penrith coach Tony Rasmussen who will think long and hard about his selections for this match.

Coast coach Jim Foley also needs to give much thought to his own choices given that he only had a two point cushion over Canterbury-Marrickville, who can spring a highly motivated upset of their own.

So much hinges on this match and all eyes will be on this top versus bottom clash at the Lisarow centre.

Expect the Jason Connolly-less Panthers to go for broke here and the Coast side to give it their best shot too.

St George Saints vs Blacktown City Demons

Saturday 1st May at St George Stadium
Kick-Off 7.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

This clash is undoubtedly 'match of the round' and with so much riding on the outcome for both teams the expectation is purely electric.

St George finally get their chance to wrap up the minor Premiership this week, but they'll need to make sure they win the game and keep an eye on the Belconnen result against league dark-horse Sydney Crescent Star on Sunday.

After years in the footballing wilderness, it would be a triumph for the coaching staff of Manny Spanoudakis and Aytec Genc if they were able to do it against their old foes Blacktown City at their home venue.

Blacktown City on the other hand isn't going to take it lying down, with a spot in the top three going into the finals on the line.

Bankstown City currently occupies that position, two points ahead, but they face a couple of difficult assignments in Bonnyrigg and St George over the next two weeks which could see the Demons pounce should they slip up.

The Demons will be buoyed by the return of Adam Kwasnik, and Mark Milligan and should have Dane Hokin available for selection this week too, after a leg injury has kept him sidelined for the past month.

When these two sides met earlier in the year at Gabbie Stadium, it was a tight-fisted affair with the Saints scoring a narrow win 1-0 via a James Kovas goal.

In eleven league meetings between these two teams at St George Stadium, the record is clearly with Blacktown City who have won eight and drawn one.

The Saints last win over the Demons at home came back in the 2000/1 season.

Sydney Crescent Star vs Belconnen Blue Devils

Sunday 2nd May at Lidcombe Oval
Kick-Off 3.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

The second spot has been sewn up by Belconnen now and without knowing the result of St George's Monday game it seems likely that the Blue Devils will have one eye on Finals' football as they approach this game.

Crescent Star had to go into the game at Bankstown, which they lost 2-0, without several key players. Orhan Dincer and stand-in striker Hakan Sevgin were both absent, suspended.

The loss of Anthony Hartshorn for the rest of the season was also keenly felt and Filip Marzec has just played his last game for the club, against Blacktown midweek, before flying to Poland to be with his partner.

This match is a must-win for the home side at Lidcombe Oval, the Star boys knowing that they must win this to keep Penrith at bay and protect themselves from a late surge by the Panthers. Belconnen may have some men back for this one — including keeper and skipper Tony Giannasca — but there are no easy games in this league so Crescent Star should not expect the Blue Devils to take this one easy by any means.

The Star home record is a good one and they do look capable of winning here assuming they can manage without the very influential Marzec. Marzec has had a good season and has made a huge difference to his side this season.

Belconnen will be without the suspended David Arranz and could also be thin at the back but at least Lee Pietrukowski will return after missing the last game.

Canterbury-Marrickville vs Parramatta Eagles

Sunday 2nd May at Henson Park
Kick-Off 3.00pm First Grade / 1.00pm Grade 20

The Berries thought they had offloaded the wooden-spoon last Saturday night when they accounted for Penrith 2-1 but the vagaries of football saw the Coasties record an upset win over Rockdale and restore their two-point advantage over the struggling Berries.

The fear of finishing last has to do with that fearful word 'relegation', and while it would be a shame to see one of the more traditional clubs in the League take the drop they have their destiny in their own hands over the next fortnight.

Given that Canterbury has made some questionable decisions over the season, not least among them the sacking of John Sentas, they will be lucky to survive.

The Eagles themselves are not completely out of the woods either and Trevor Morgan would appreciate another three points just to make absolutely certain.

The Eagles have been labeled giant-killers in recent weeks, having accounted for A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt and Bonnyrigg, but just how they will perform against one of the bottom sides should be interesting.

It might sound a cliché but the key to this game is definitely Steve Karávatakis. While Winter Super League clubs line up to acquire his services, the Berries will be hoping he can add to his tally of ten goals and save the club for next years revamped League.

At Melita Stadium in round one, Canterbury scored one of their four wins with Aheleas Kotsopoulos netting twice inside the first ten minutes.

In 45 league meetings between these two clubs, stretching all the way back to 1967, the honours rest with the Eagles who have scored 21 wins and eleven draws to the Berries 13.

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FROM THE SIDELINES

WITH GREG STOCK

Waves at Wollongong

Former Rockdale City suns coach Bill Pilovski is making waves as the new coach of First Division club Wollongong United. Formerly known as Illawarra Lions the club has won six of its first eight starts with just one loss as it attempts to seek promotion to the Winter Super League by seasons end.

"So far so good," Pilovski said when FTS caught up with him during the week, "the club has been superb in helping me secure a competitive squad with the aim of finishing top three and pressing our claims for promotion."

Having bought a large tract of land at Berkeley just near Kembla Grange Racecourse, the club has laid the foundations for a first-class playing facility, pouring concrete for terracing and building new dressing rooms and a canteen area. The idea being that over the next twelve months the facilities will be further enhanced and be ready should they succeed with plans for promotion.

"The club and the committee figure that after a few years of being in the footballing wilderness they need to re-establish the club in the top winter competition," Pilovski said, "the club even had a season playing in the National League, so the basis is there, it's just a matter of getting it together and showing we are capable of mixing it with the best."

Pilovski's squad includes the likes of Hussein Jomaa, Ali Jomaa, Robert Todorovski, Malcolm Bideau and ex-Sutherland duo of Dejan Ristovski and Daniel Farias.

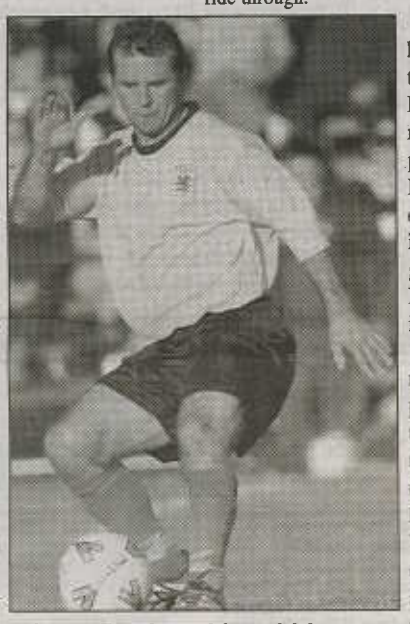
Senatas and the Berries

Former Canterbury-Marrickville coach John Sentas is not letting the grass grow under his feet, contemplating a few offers to return to the coaching fold.

Sentas has stated to FTS that his immediate intention is to wait and see what happens with next seasons Premier League before making a decision.

"My whole motivation for taking the Canterbury role was to keep my foot in the door as far as coaching in the Premier League was concerned," Sentas said, "with the possibility of a revamped league in season 2004/5 I felt I could help Canterbury stave off relegation and push themselves into a safe position and ready themselves for the following season. Sadly that didn't happen, so I am going to see what happens at the end of the season and then make a decision after that."

Since Sentas departed the coaching bench at Canterbury, the club has gone into a spin, losing four of its last six games before the much-needed 2-1 win over Penrith. With the Coasties win over the Suns on Sunday, sadly for the club they are still looking the odds-on favourites for relegation. Historically, the club hasn't had that dubious honour since 1973 but unless they can pick up some points in the next two weeks it could be a case of 'what might have been.'



Saso Boskovski and his new 'Floating Lotus' kicking style

They say a picture speaks a thousands words. ABSW feels that if this picture of White Eagle keeper Cem Akili - during the 5-0 thrashing at the hands of Blacktown - could speak it would need only four: 'Get me outta here!'

Jimmy's walking-wounded

Dulwich Hill coach Jimmy Patikas' bad luck continues with an injury list a mile long. Ten first graders including the likes of Eddie Wong (Glandular Fever), Joe Mendes (ankle) and Andrew Falas (hamstring) adjourn the list which has seen the formeroo dig into the under-20's in a bid to field a competitive first grade side.

"To say it's a crisis is something of an understatement," Patikas said, "out of my original seventeen man squad I have ten players who are injured, including four guys who are out for the season with knee reconstructions. I have never struck it this bad at any club I have been to as player or coach and it's just something we have to ride through."

But there is light at the end of the tunnel for Patikas with a number of high-profile Premier League players expected to come in before the game against Manly-Warringah in Round Eleven.

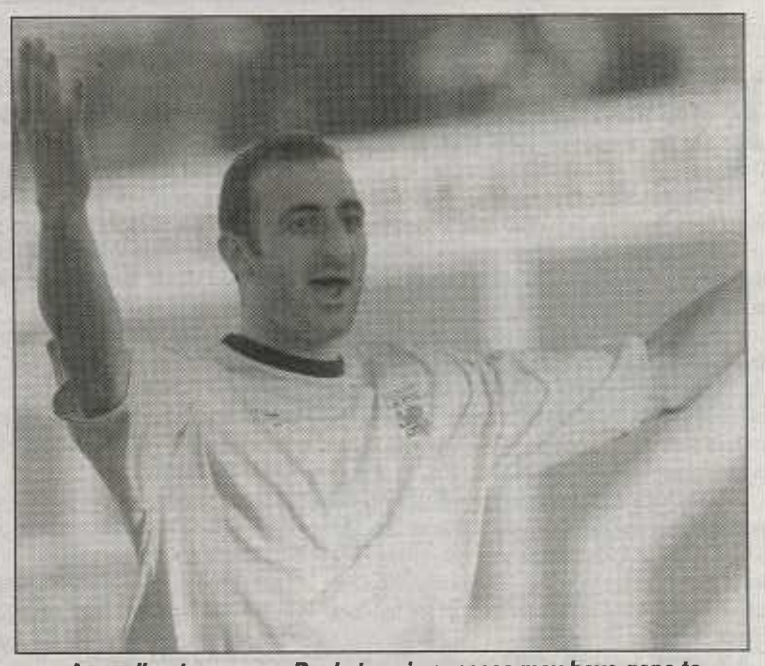
"We are just running out of fit players so we had to bite the bullet to bring in some experience to help out the kids. With the number of youngsters we are bringing through the side next year is going to be very strong as these boys have been pushed through much quicker than we would have liked.

Aaron Franks-Lehane Benefit Match

The Blue Devils raised some much needed funds for the Aaron Franks-Lehane fund during the A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt game on Saturday night.

Aaron is an amazing little boy. In January surgeons removed his badly damaged feet and most of his fingers but it hasn't stopped the four-year-old meningococcal disease survivor from wanting to play.

At half-time a challenge was set by Alan Reis of Flight Centre, he offered $200 for every Devils goal in the second-half, provided someone else would donate $100 per goal. Ron Ratchford of PV Cleaners came to the party, so the Devils went out for the second-half not just trying to win the game, but raising money with every goal they scored.



According to sources Bankstown's success may have gone to Mat Borg's head. Seen here demanding that the crowd 'worship him like a god', one can only wonder. Apparently the crowd did not comply.
(Please note that this story has no basis in fact, yet)

PREMIER LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK

GOALKEEPER:

Zlatko Josevski (Bankstown City) – Another outstanding performance from the pint-sized goalkeeper who saved a penalty and made a number of crucial blocks at key stages in the match, posting his third straight clean sheet in the process.

DEFENDERS:

Matthew Mitchell (Central Coast) – A sterling performance from the young Coasties defender, who did not stopped running all afternoon.

Patrick Lloyd (Belconnen Blue Devils) – Making his startling debut in the senior side he had an excellent game playing in front of a depleted Blue Devils back four.

Cormack Begley (Canterbury-Marrickville) – Kept his side in the hunt against Penrith with some excellent defending under extreme circumstances.

Richard Luksic (Bankstown City) – Another excellent performance from the tall stopper who kept the chances for Crescent Star down to an absolute minimum.

MIDFIELDERS:

Daniel Surridge (Central Coast) – Up against the Suns Peter Apolevski, he gave him an absolute bath, capping off a historic day for the club by scoring the third goal to seal the match.

Mark Milligan (Blacktown City) – Returned from international duty to score a fine goal and lend good support from a wide midfield position.

Kain Rastall (Blacktown City) – Patrolled the midfield with cool authority and showing his customary discipline and confidence, led the charge for the resurgent Demons

James Monie (A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt) – Finally realized his potential for his newest club after a disappointing season, and harassed the Belconnon defence with speed and skill.

STRIKERS:

Adam Kwasnik (Blacktown City) – Led the Demons attack scoring two goals and causing the Bonnyrigg defenders no end of problems.

Peter Haynes (Central Coast) – Scored two of the most important goals in Coasties history, laying the foundations for his sides upset win.

COACH:

Jim Foley (Central Coast) – It was backs to the wall for the Coasties coach on Sunday with his team on the bottom of the table and needing a win. He motivated his side to pull off one of the upset wins of the season, stunning the Rockdale fans to send them crashing out of the race for the top-five.

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FRASER PARK FLEX THEIR MUSCLE

By Greg Stock

Fraser Park continued their reign at the top of the Winter Super League table accounting for a spirited Ryde City at Magdala Oval.

The Dragons started off the better of the two sides with Glenn Sprod curling a free-kick around the wall in the 13th minute to give them an early 1-0 lead, but then went to sleep allowing the Gunners to come storming back.

Despite missing a couple of near chances from headers, Ryde came back strongly in the 23rd minute via a well taken Greg Fuchs goal. Ex Northern Spirit midfielder Alex Wilkinson laid on an excellent through ball which saw Fuchs beat Dragons keeper Jason Holmes with the one-on-one.

The Leagues leading scorer Tanju Balabanel laid on the winner for partner Spiro Kladis in the 63rd minute when he found Kladis with a well-taken corner unmarked at the back post. The former Minotaurs player pigeon-holed his header into the top left-hand corner.

Ryde coach Jim Harte would have been a tad disappointed with his forwards who missed a number of late opportunities to snare an equaliser, Fuchs, Damian Pisano and Ollie Skelding all bombing good chances.

Hajduk continued their run of good form joining Fraser Park at the top of the table, defeating a disappointing Fairfield Bulls 2-1 at Hajduk Stadium.

Unbeaten in their last four starts the Bulls started overwhelming favourites but fell behind to a Tim Gledhill goal in the 35th minute. Navid Varess and George Issa combined well to set up Gledhill who slammed home his shot from the edge of the six-yard box.

Some excellent work from goalkeeper Claudio Fernandez kept the visitors in the hunt before speedster Nenos Bobo got on the end of a cross from the left to nod home the equaliser.

But the best was yet to come. Deep into injury time Wanderers substitute Tuan Cao worked through a tired Bulls defence and found the net, giving them all three points in the dying moments of the match.

Macarthur Rams moved into equal third spot with a 1-1 draw on fellow contenders Stanmore Hawks at Henson Park. Despite a cameo performance from Rams striker Male Vukosa, the Hawks clearly dominated and should have had the game well and truly wrapped up by half-time.

The Hawks conceded a cheap goal in the 20th minute when down to ten men - midfielder Con Gatsios off the field for treatment - when Vukosa raced onto a clearance from goalkeeper Phil Zabaks to successfully go one-on-one with an advancing Con Anastasiadis.

David James got the home side back on level terms in the 35th minute when he put away a rebound from an Omar Obied shot, but in an action-packed second-half it was Stanmore coach Sotiri Mavros that would have had heart palpitations watching his side butcher opportunities for a winner with what seemed like wild abandon.

The closest of which was a free header from Scott Baillie in the 86th minute, which skimmed the crossbar after he was left unattended at the back post.

Manly-Warringah slipped to fourth spot on the back of a poor performance against Sutherland at Cromer Park. Their 1-0 loss cancelled out all the good work of their last start demolition of Fraser Park.

Adam Mamolitti snared the only goal of the game when he raced onto a Matthew Dihm ball in the 40th minute. Without the influential Steve Berry the Dolphins creativity suffered as they changed their system back to a 4-4-2 in a bid to compensate for the Sharks free-running game.

By contrast Sutherland kept their defence intact by defending their back third with great vigour, youngster Daniel Tosolini alongside skipper Dihm having an excellent game.

MSC Liverpool coach Paul Carter was a cock-a-hoop after watching his side lift themselves from the foot of the table with a comprehensive 2-1 win over the struggling Dulwich Hill.

With Jimmy Patikas ringing the changes in the Dulwich Hill lineup, the honours went to the home side who never gave in despite being behind 1-0 to a Mark Ferreira goal in the 44th minute.

Two goals in the last five minutes from Claudio Oricchio and Dominic Rossi nailed the result, which lifts them to eleventh on the League table.

Northern Tigers crashed to a second straight defeat when beaten 2-0 by a rampaging Minotaurs side at Rockdale.

Youngster Dimitri Zakilas lead the way with two well-taken goals for the 'Generals Eleven' who have seemingly turned the corner after a run of outs. His partner Marino Musumeci was unstoppable as he laid on the final pass for both goals, and hit the post with a third chance late in the game.

To their credit the Tigers did have a couple of near misses of their own, hitting the post midway through the second-half, but with Pieros Vassilearas and veteran Sam Panagakis running a tight ship at the back, the result was never in doubt.

In the other game Sydney University defeated Hurstville ZSC in a tight one at University Oval, with Peter Peralta scoring the winner in the 49th minute.

In the deferred game at Henson Park last Wednesday night Stanmore were the team to begin well against Sutherland, who came into their own as the first-half wore on.

At the break there had been no goals, but Monte Pfrengle had hit the crossbar for the Sharks and Hawks' midfielder Scott Baillie had also gone close, when well placed to score, shooting wide instead.

The game continued to be very tight and neither side could find an opening until Baillie was able to cut inside and pick his spot, delivering a low shot from close range.

As the Sharks sought a quick response Stanmore scored a second, this time a crisply-struck volley from ten yards out from Sargun Dawd, a signing from Wanderers Cedars.

Sutherland played well and gave Stanmore a good game, but could not breach a very strong and well organised defence.

For the Hawks George Zabitakis and Sam Awad had solid games, as did both goal scorers.

Winter Super League Goalscorers
Monday 26th April

7 Tanju Balabanel (FP).
6 Nenos Bobo (FB).
5 Eddie Adam (HZSC), Tim Gledhill (HWU), Male Vukosa (MR).
4 Richard Harrison (MR), Iain MacDonald (SS), Paul Wither (MR), Tallan Martin (DH), Demetri Zakilas (HCM).
3 Michael Williams (MWD), Rob Smithies (SU), Johnny Ghisso (FB), Brent Fisher (MWD), Tom Mikulski (NT), Marino Musemici (HCM), Eric Williams (MSC), Scott Baillie (SH), Spyro Kladis (FP).
2 Dean Heffernan (SS), Navid Varess (HWU), Matt Hunter (NT), Zia Younan (FP), Maurice Soler (SH), Chris Hunt (SS), John Chavez (DH), Damien Pisano (RC), Ben Realph (MSC), Peter Satos (SU), Gary Seymour (MR), Leigh Gunn (FB), Ante Jusic (HZSC), Manuel Sarikakis (HCM), Robert Babaic (HZSC), Sargun Dawd (SH), Claudio Oricchio (MSC), Neil Philippou (SH).
1 Ben Evans (MR), Gary Seymour (MR), Jason Mesiti (NT), Anthony Oppedisano (NT), Joe Simic (HZSC), Rob Portelli (MWD), Mohammad Mansaray (DH), Brendan Mitrovich (FB), Steve Baveas (RC), Adam Wither (MR), Anthony Sarmonikas (SS), Danny Georges (MSC), Jason Lal (DH), Javier Mancino (FB), Oliver Skelding (RC), Andrew Mailer (FP), David OHan (FP), Chris Demetriou (HCM), Joe Vrkic (HZSC), Sam Awad (SH), Steve Berry (MWD), Daniel Jurleta (HZSC), Modar Sultan (HCM),1 Adam Mammoliti (SS), Glen Sprod (FP), Tuan Cao (HWU), Greg Fuchs (RC), David James (SH), Dominic Rossi (MSC), Peter Peralta (SU), Mark Ferreira (DH)

WINTER SUPER LEAGUE - RESCHEDULED FIXTURE: ROUND 6:
FIRST GRADE: Stanmore Hawks 2 (S Baillie 80m S Dawd 88m) Sutherland Shire Sharks 0
GRADE 20: Stanmore Hawks 1 Sutherland Shire Sharks 4

WINTER SUPER LEAGUE: ROUND 8:
FIRST GRADE: Stanmore Hawks 1 (D James 35m) Macarthur Rams 1 (N Vukosa 20m), MSC Liverpool 2 (C Oricchio 86m D Rossi 89m) Dulwich Hill 1 (M Ferreira 44m), Hurstville City Minotaurs 2 (D Zakilas 43/62m) Northern Tigers 0, Sydney University 1 (P Peralta 49m) Hurstville ZSC 0, Ryde City 1 (G Fuchs 23m) Fraser Park Dragons 2 (G Sprod 13m S Kladis 63m), Hajduk Wanderers United 2 (T Gledhill 35m T Cao 92m) Fairfield Bulls 1 (N Bobo 90m), Manly Warringah Dolphins 0 Sutherland Shire Sharks 1 (A Mammoliti 40m)
GRADE 20: Stanmore Hawks 0 Macarthur Rams 2, MSC Liverpool 2 Dulwich Hill 1, Hurstville City Minotaurs 1 Northern Tigers 1, Sydney University 1 Hurstville ZSC 1, Ryde City 0 Fraser Park Dragons 2, Hajduk Wanderers United 2 Fairfield Bulls 3, Manly Warringah Dolphins 2 Sutherland Shire Sharks 0

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION ONE - RESCHEDULED FIXTURE: ROUND 1:
FIRST GRADE: Camden Tigers 2 (G Mackechnie 77m T Parker 82m) Fairfield City Lions 2 (H Bayhan 37m A Cetinay 86m pen)
GRADE 20: Camden Tigers 1 Fairfield City Lions 1

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION ONE: ROUND 9:
FIRST GRADE: Bathurst 75 4 (A Gaeta 63m R Guihot 72m L Taylor 81m D Baillie 89m) Schofields Scorpions 1 (H Merdanovic 38m), Belmore Hercules 1 (J Melissourgos 5m) Western Rage 1 (D Borg 9m), Fairfield City Lions 3 (P Canderlori 24/60m H Hatipoglu 90m) Wollongong United 2 (A Jomma 42/49m), Liverpool Bossy 1 (V Jaganjac 87m) Nepean Association 2 (G McPherson 68/85m), Mt Pritchard 4 (M Maco 13m M Severino 58m G Lowe 75/92m) The Wanderers 0, Camden Tigers 1 (P Dallas 56m) Mt Druitt Town Rangers 1 (S Sahib 32m), White City 1 (R Mandic 80m) Hills United 1 (J Miller 13m)
GRADE 20: Bathurst 75 0 Schofields Scorpions 1, Belmore Hercules 0 Western Rage 5, Fairfield City Lions 6 Wollongong United 2, Liverpool Bossy 0 Nepean Association 1, Mt Pritchard 4 The Wanderers 2, Camden Tigers 0 Mt Druitt Town Rangers 4, White City 0 Hills United 2.

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION TWO - RESCHEDULED FIXTURE: ROUND 3:
FIRST GRADE: Auburn Stars vs Greystanes SC Postponed
GRADE 21: Auburn Stars 2 Greystanes SC 4
GRADE 19: Auburn Stars 0 Greystanes SC 0

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION TWO - ROUND 5:
FIRST GRADE: Blacktown Districts 2 (J Palumbo 77m pen S Falanga 85m) UNSW 0, Hawkesbury City 1 (D Bertenshaw 92m) Inter Lions 1 (L Wright 31m), Springwood SC 0 Prospect United 0
GRADE 21: Blacktown Districts 1 UNSW 1, Hawkesbury City 1 Inter Lions 2, Springwood SC 6 Prospect United 0
GRADE 19: Blacktown Districts 0 UNSW 3, Hawkesbury City 1 Inter Lions 4, Springwood SC 0 Prospect United 3

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION THREE - ROUND 5:
FIRST GRADE: Balmain SC 3 Gladesville United 1, Trasandinos 2 Colo Colo 0, Gazy Lansvale 0 Earlwood Wanderers 1, Lithgow Workmen 2 Sporting SCC 0, East Coast Magic 3 Kellyville Kolts 1, Roosters FC 2 Sydney Cedars SC 4
RESERVE GRADE: Balmain SC 2 Gladesville United 2, Trasandinos 1 Colo Colo 1, Gazy Lansvale 0 Earlwood Wanderers 5, Lithgow Workmen 0 Sporting SCC 1, East Coast Magic 1 Kellyville Kolts 1, Roosters FC 1 Sydney Cedars SC 3

ARRIVE ALIVE NSW WOMENS SUPER LEAGUE: ROUND 5:
FIRST GRADE: Macarthur Rams 1 (L Khamis 69m) Nepean Association 0, North West Sydney Koalas 3 (L Carr 5m J Burgess 14m H Todd 76m) Wollongong Wolves 2 (V Mann 12/35m), Sutherland Association 1 (K Hilder 72m) Manly Warringah Dolphins 0, NSW Academy 6 (B Ristevski N Spirovski K Cavanagh x 2 Y Uzunlar K Ledbrook) Bathurst City Panthers 1 (C Halloway), Marconi 3 (L Gilbert 9m N Kimber 67m A Cavanagh 73m) UNSW 0
GRADE 21: Macarthur Rams 1 Nepean Association 4, North West Sydney Koalas 3 Wollongong Wolves 0, Sutherland Association 2 Manly Warringah Dolphins 1, NSW Academy 8 Bathurst City Panthers 0, Marconi 7 UNSW 1

ARRIVE ALIVE NSW WOMENS STATE LEAGUE: ROUND 5:
FIRST GRADE: Blacktown Districts 1 (N Ridder 86m) Gladesville Ravens 2 (M Corderoy 14m K Allen 73m), Roselands Raptors 1 (B Jarvis 17m) Hawkesbury City 2 (A Webster 34m L Baker 80m), Central Coast FC 3 (S Hockey 22m G McMinimee 59m J Hedge 69m) Southern Branch 1 (K French 34m), St George Association 5 (A Koncurat 51/53/66m C Sneddon 2/71m) Granville Rage 2 (L Bailey 33m K Bell 69m)
GRADE 21: Blacktown Districts 2 Gladesville Ravens 1, Roselands Raptors 6 Hawkesbury City 0, Central Coast FC 3 Southern Branch 1, St George Association 3 Granville Rage 1

PREMIER YOUTH LEAGUE - ROUND 9:
GRADE 13: APIA Leichhardt Tigers 5 Macarthur Rams 2, Newcastle United 4 Sutherland Shire Sharks 0, Marconi Stallions 5 Gladesville Spirit SC 0, Sydney United 2 Blacktown City Demons 3, Parramatta Eagles 2 Sydney Olympic 0, Wollongong Wolves 1 Hajduk Wanderers Utd 2, Central Coast United 1 Bankstown City Cubs 3
GRADE 14: APIA Leichhardt Tigers 2 Macarthur Rams 2, Newcastle United 1 Sutherland Shire Sharks 4, Marconi Stallions 0 Gladesville Spirit SC 1, Sydney United 1 Blacktown City Demons 2, Parramatta Eagles 1 Sydney Olympic, 0, Wollongong Wolves 2 Hajduk Wanderers Utd 0, Central Coast United 0 Bankstown City Cubs 2
GRADE 15: APIA Leichhardt Tigers 2 Macarthur Rams 0, Newcastle United 0 Sutherland Shire Sharks 0, Marconi Stallions 1 Gladesville Spirit SC 0, Sydney United 0 Blacktown City Demons 4, Parramatta Eagles 0 Sydney Olympic 1, Wollongong Wolves 4 Hajduk Wanderers Utd 1, Central Coast United 1 Bankstown City Cubs 0
GRADE 16: APIA Leichhardt Tigers 2 Macarthur Rams 1, Newcastle United 2 Sutherland Shire Sharks 1, Marconi Stallions 0 Gladesville Spirit SC 0, Sydney United 2 Blacktown City Demons 0, Parramatta Eagles 0 Sydney Olympic 1, Wollongong Wolves 3 Hajduk Wanderers Utd 0, Central Coast United 0 Bankstown City Cubs 1
GRADE 18: APIA Leichhardt Tigers 3 Macarthur Rams 0, Newcastle United 0 Sutherland Shire Sharks 2, Marconi Stallions 1 Gladesville Spirit SC 0, Sydney United 1 Blacktown City Demons 0, Parramatta Eagles 3 Sydney Olympic 3, Wollongong Wolves 2 Hajduk Wanderers Utd 1, Central Coast United 1 Bankstown City Cubs 1

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE - ROUND 7:
GRADE 13: Fairfield Bulls 0 Granville Rage 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Southern Branch 1, Fraser Park-Canterbury 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 4, St George 3 Penrith Nepean United 0, Northern Tigers 0 Schofields Scorpions 1, Parramatta Star 2 Hills United 1
GRADE 14: Fairfield Bulls 1 Granville Rage 0, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0 Southern Branch 0, Fraser Park-Canterbury 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 0, St George 2 Penrith Nepean United 0, Northern Tigers 0 Schofields Scorpions 2, Parramatta Star 1 Hills United 2
GRADE 15: Fairfield Bulls 2 Granville Rage 3, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 4 Southern Branch 0, Fraser Park-Canterbury 2 Manly Warringah Dolphins 0, St George 0 Penrith Nepean United 2, Northern Tigers 2 Schofields Scorpions 1, Parramatta Star 1 Hills United 1
GRADE 16: Fairfield Bulls 1 Granville Rage 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Southern Branch 1, Fraser Park-Canterbury 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 1, St George 1 Penrith Nepean United 0, Northern Tigers 2 Schofields Scorpions 0, Parramatta Star 4 Hills United 1
GRADE 18: Fairfield Bulls 3 Granville Rage 1, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Southern Branch 2, Fraser Park-Canterbury 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 2, St George 2 Penrith Nepean United 1, Northern Tigers 1 Schofields Scorpions 0, Parramatta Star 2 Hills United 1

DIVISION ONE YOUTH LEAGUE - ROUND 7:
GRADE 13: Bathurst 75 Western 2 Belmore Hercules 0, Dulwich Hill 0 Wollongong United 2, Camden Tigers 1 Sydney Uni Eastern Lions 1, Mt Druitt Town Rangers 2 Stanmore Hawks 1, Rockdale City Suns 1 Ryde City 4
GRADE 14: Bathurst 75 Western 0 Belmore Hercules 0, Dulwich Hill 2 Wollongong United 1, Camden Tigers 2 Sydney Uni Eastern Lions 0, Mt Druitt Town Rangers 6 Stanmore Hawks 1, Rockdale City Suns 1 Ryde City 0
GRADE 15: Bathurst 75 Western 4 Belmore Hercules 0, Dulwich Hill 2 Wollongong United 1, Camden Tigers 0 Sydney Uni Eastern Lions 1, Mt Druitt Town Rangers 3 Stanmore Hawks 1, Rockdale City Suns 1 Ryde City 1
GRADE 16: Bathurst 75 Western 2 Belmore Hercules 0, Dulwich Hill 1 Wollongong United 2, Camden Tigers 3 Sydney Uni Eastern Lions 0, Mt Druitt Town 2 Stanmore Hawks 3, Rockdale City Suns 2 Ryde City 1
GRADE 18: Bathurst 75 Western 2 Belmore Hercules 2, Dulwich Hill 3 Wollongong United 0 Win by Forfeit, Camden Tigers 4 Sydney Uni Eastern Lions 1, Mt Druitt Town Rangers 1 Stanmore Hawks 1, Rockdale City Suns 0 Ryde City 4

S.S.I. GIRLS YOUTH LEAGUE: ROUND 7:
GRADE 12: UNSW 4 Southern Branch 0
GRADE 14: UNSW 2 Southern Branch 4
GRADE 16: UNSW 0 Southern Branch 15

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Continental

TYRES - ENGINEERED IN GERMANY

The penultimate round of the inaugural 2004 Continental Tyres Cup takes place this Wednesday night in Sydney.

The experience within the ranks of both these semi-finalists will ensure an exciting match.

On offer for the potential cup finalists is a share of $28,000 in prizemoney. A fact that will ensure some memorable matches in the 2004 Continental Tyres Cup.

Blacktown City Demons
v
Sydney Crescent Star
Wednesday 28th April Kickoff 7.30pm
Gabbie Stadium, Seven Hills

The Blacktown City Demons host Sydney Cresecent Star at the Gabbie Stadium. Both teams faced each other a fortnight ago at Lidcombe oval where a scoreless draw was the result. Blacktown had the upper-hand in round eight when they met at the Gabbie when a Marcus Phillips screamer eraned them the points.

After their 5-0 drubbing of fellow semi-finallists Bonnyrigg White Eagles last weekend, the Demons come into this match full of confidence and eager to book a place in the final on the 16th of May.

Sydney Cresent Star are sitting fifth on the NSW Premier League table one place behind the Demons and a three point buffer to Penrith. While finals position beckons for Star, the lure of a Cup Final berth and the prize money on offer will ensure a blockbuster.

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers
v
Bonnyrigg White Eagles
Wednesday 28th April Kickoff 7.30pm
Lambert Park, Leichhardt

A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers face the Bonnyrigg White Eagles at their historic Lambert Park home ground. Both teams have had seasons that they would like to forget in the NSW Premier League. With neither team in a position to participate in the post-season, the Continental Tyres Cup is the only way that these once proud clubs can salvage some pride and hope for a piece of silverware.

A.P.I.A. have had a mixed season with a star-studded team that has failed to live up to their 'on-paper' expectations. Bonnyrigg have been through a number of players and coaches and still haven't found the winning combination that they once had. Bonnyrigg does have the psychological advantage going into the match having defeated the Tigers on both occasions during the NSW Premier League season.

Arrive alive NSW WOMENS SUPER LEAGUE

Round 5 of the Arrive alive NSW Womens Super League saw the NSW Academy at Valentine Sports Park for the first time this season, and missing a number of players away on international duties.

Nonetheless last season champions secured a huge 6-1 win over the Bathurst City Panthers in an exciting game.

Natalie Spirovski, set the scene for the match, scoring the Academy's first goal in the opening minutes. In the 12th minute, Catherine Cavanagh scored a second goal for Academy, placing the ball neatly over the Bathurst keeper's head. Two minutes later Cavanagh scored her second, bringing the ball from within her half, past the Panthers defence and slotted past the keeper, and straight into the goal.

The Panthers did a good job of pushing the ball out of the Academy's scoring third into the midfield, but excellent tactical skills and good team communication allowed Academy to bring it back down each time. In the 37th minute, Belinda Ristevski added to the Academy Tally with a well-taken goal from outside the 18 yard box, that slipped through the fingers of the Panthers, keeper.

In the 43rd minute, the Panthers Clare Halloway followed through on an opportunity created after a corner, shooting from the right into the left corner of the goal.

In the 77th minute, Kylie Ledbrook provided the Academy's fifth through a crowded 18-yard box.

Bathurst's coach Glen Stedeman was not happy with his team's performance and admitted that it was not one of their finest games, "this was well below par for us. We stood back and waited for something to happen, rather than going in there and fighting for it."

The North West Sydney Koalas maintained their lead in the competition with a close 3-2 win over the Wollongong Wolves at Morrison Bay. It was a quick start to the game, with the Koalas, Leah Carr scoring their first goal in the opening five minutes.

The score was 2-1 until the final ten mintues of the first-half, when Wollongong's Vanessa Mann scored another goal, bringing the score to 2-all at half-time.

Hayley Todd scored the final and winning goal for the Koalas in the 76th minute, giving them their fifth win for the season.

At Lynwood Park, the Macarthur Rams also had a 1-0 victory over the Nepean Association. Nepean had a few shots on goal, but did not follow through on any. Macarthur had a few more chances than Nepean, but didn't manage to put one away until the 69th minute through Leena Khamis. Sutherland had a home game this weekend, and had a much-needed 1-0 win over the Manly Warringah Dolphins.

No goals were scored in the first-half, and most of the action was in the midfield. Sutherland's Katie Hilder scored their winning goal in the 72nd minute from 20-metres out.

This was a great effort for Katie, as she literally stepped off the plane from Port Moresby drove to the game, and came on for the last 25 minutes.

UNSW travelled out to play the Marconi Stallions at Marconi Stadium but went home with a 3-0 loss.

In a tough physical game, many opportunities were created by both sides. Marconi went ahead early with a well taken goal by Lisa Gilbert beating Ruth Jago in the UNSW goal at the near post from an acute angle. Unfortunately, at the same time, the Stallions lost key player Niesha Klessatel to a niggling hamstring injury, who took no further part in the game. The match was even balanced up until the break with both teams squandering chances.

Soon into the second-half a sublime goal by Nicole Kimber from outside the UNSW box and another from long-range by Alicia Cavanagh sealed the victory for the Stallions which places them second on the table behind the Koalas.

Arrive alive NSW WOMENS STATE LEAGUE

The leading team in the ARRIVE ALIVE NSW WOMENS STATE LEAGUE, Sydney University, had a bye this weekend, but the other teams produced some entertaining football.

Hawkesbury City travelled to play the Roselands Raptors at Bennet Park, and were ecstatic with their first win of the season.

It is Hawkesbury's first year in the league, and this game yielded them not only their first win, but also their first points scored in the competition.

Central Coast United played at home this week and secured a 3-1 win over Southern Branch. Central Coast had a strong outside attack and a tight defence, which Southern Branch found hard to penetrate.

The score was 1-1 at half-time, but Central Coast came back stronger in the second-half and put two more goals away, giving them the points.

St George had a big 5-2 home victory against Granville Rage at St George Stadium, placing them a close second on the table.

St George's Courtney Sneddon quickly put a goal away in the second minute of play, and the game was locked at 1-0 until Granville's Leah Bailey scored in the 33rd minute, taking the game to a draw at half-time.

St George proved to be the stronger team, and a hat-trick of brilliant goals by Angelina Koncurat and another goal by Courtney Sneddon secured their decisive win.

In a late game, the Gladesville Ravens played Blacktown Districts at Francis Park and came away with a 2-1 win.

The Ravens scored early in the first-half and maintained that lead throughout the game.

The play ran constantly from end to end and both teams created some great opportunities. The keepers on both teams played a strong game and made numerous impressive saves.

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